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THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE DURING THE ADMINISTRATION
OF PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON

NOVEMBER 1963 - JANUARY 1969

VOLUME I

ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY

PART IV

[Chapter 4 (Parts H-I)
chapter 5]

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H. ARAB-ISRAEL CONFLICT

I. UNITED STATES POLICY AND DIPLOMACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS, MAY 15-JUNE 10, 1967

SUMMARY

Revived irredentist activities by militant Palestinian Arabs who were backed by Syria and equipped with sophisticated weapons gravely intensified Middle East tensions in May 1967. These activities, in turn, set in motion the train of events which triggered the six-day Arab-Israeli War of June 5-10. Although unable to influence some key Arab governments, the United States did help to restrain Israel's initial response to Arab provocations, and with the outbreak of hostilities, American pressure helped induce Israel to effect cease-fires with the three Arab States whose territory it had invaded.

Border incidents, raids, and retaliatory actions between the Israelis and the Arab revanchists operating out of Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon had been common occurrences ever since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. On only two occasions—in 1948-1949 and in 1956-1957—had such border situations developed into full-scale warfare. It thus might normally have been expected that the flare-ups along the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli frontiers in the spring of 1967 would spend themselves without a major conflagration, but several unique factors operated in a contrary direction. The advanced types of weapons used and the training skills displayed by the Arab guerrillas indicated to the Israelis that these incidents were more than the usual nuisance raids. Secondly, the local organizations by which border violations could be investigated—the Mixed Armistice Commissions staffed by Israel and its four Arab neighbors—had become virtually inoperable. Thirdly, the irredentist movement had gathered such momentum that any Arab government which refused to support it risked ouster by coup. And, finally, in their eagerness to demonstrate loyalty to the irredentist cause, certain Arab governments (that of Egypt in particular) took such severely restrictive measures against Israel as drastically to shorten the fuse leading to the explosion.

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At the outset of the May crises, Syria, as the instigator of the border incidents, was the only power Israel had to confront, and the Tel Aviv Government heeded American counsel of restraint in the hope that representations by the U.N. Secretary-General would cool down the Arab side. Such hopes evaporated, however, when the Egyptian Government on May 16 manifested its solidarity with Syria by demanding the withdrawal of the observer patrols of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) along the Israeli-Egyptian border in Sinai. Secretary-General U Thant promptly complied with the Egyptian request. In these new circumstances, President Johnson sent a letter to Prime Minister Eshkol of Israel on May 17 expressing sympathetic understanding of the strain placed upon Israel's patience by the measures adopted by Egypt; the President warned, however, that the United States would not consider itself involved in any situation resulting from Israeli actions on which it had not been consulted in advance. Israel, while refraining from drastic reactions to Syrian and Egyptian provocations, pressed the United States for a public statement on the extent of the American commitment to Israel's security. But in lieu of making a public commitment to Israel President Johnson wrote to President Nasser, Prime Minister Eshkol, and the Prime Minister of Syria and released a public statement in support of the peace-making efforts of U Thant, who had announced plans to visit Cairo.

The situation in the Middle East suddenly became a full-fledged crisis when, on May 22, with U Thant en route to Cairo, the Egyptian Government announced that, having seized the outpost of Sharm-el-Sheikh on the Egyptian side of the Strait of Tiran, it was closing the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping and to the ships of any other nations carrying strategic goods to Israeli ports. The United States immediately declared the Egyptian action illegal and displayed interest in a British proposal that the principal maritime powers draw up a declaration of intent to assure free passage through the Strait of Tiran and concert naval action to enforce such passage.

The crisis brought Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban to Washington, where, in talks with Secretary of State Rusk and President Johnson on May 25 and 26, he attempted to discover how much support Israel might expect from the United States. Eban was assured that the United States was committed to the principle of free and innocent passage through the Strait of Tiran and that,

should the U.N. Secretary-General and the U.N. Security Council fail in their efforts to enforce this principle, the United States would press for adoption of the maritime declaration proposed by the British. At the same time, the Secretary and the President warned the Israelis against any "preemptive strikes" on Egypt and assured them that they would be alone only if they acted alone. On May 30 Prime Minister Eshkol informed President Johnson that, on the basis of these new assurances from the United States, the Israeli Government had decided to await developments for a further limited period before taking steps of its own.

In an effort to determine Egypt's intentions, President Johnson sent former Secretary of the Treasury Robert B. Anderson to Cairo as his special personal representative on May 30. Following discussion with Anderson, President Nasser informed Johnson of the United Arab Republic's determination to defend itself against any aggression "with all our means and potentialities". On the conciliatory side, Nasser promised innocent passage in Arab territorial waters,* absolved Egypt of any complicity in activities of the Palestinian Arabs, and suggested a visit to Washington by the Egyptian Vice President, Zakareya Mohieddin--an idea which was dropped when hostilities broke out a week later.

The United States also explored, with various maritime nations, the concept of a declaration of intent respecting passage through the Strait of Tiran, and worked vainly in the U.N. Security Council for a resolution supporting Secretary-General U Thant's appeal for a "breathing spell". These endeavors, too, ground to a halt on the morning of June 5 when Israel and Egypt entered into armed conflict.

Following the outbreak of hostilities between Israeli and Egyptian forces in Sinai, the United States concentrated on getting a cease-fire resolution through the U.N. Security Council. It made these moves at the United Nations against a background of bitter Egyptian charges that the United States had given air support for initial Israeli ground action against the U.A.R.

*Presumably for all nations except Israel, with whom Egypt had regarded itself as in a state of war since 1948.

These accusations were coupled with a break in diplomatic relations with the United States--a step taken also by several other Arab States. The United States promptly denied the charges and offered to place the records and crew of American carriers in the Sixth Fleet at the disposal of an impartial investigating team. In the meantime, Soviet insistence that Israel relinquish all conquests as part of a cessation of hostilities held up the adoption of a U.N. cease-fire resolution. When the Soviet Union finally withdrew this demand, the Security Council adopted a simple cease-fire resolution, on the evening of June 6.

Throughout the period of hostilities, the United States attempted to prevent any further deterioration in its relations with the Arab States. Working principally through a sympathetic Shah of Iran, the United States was able to cause the Arab governments not immediately involved in the conflict to entertain second thoughts about being stampeded into support of Nasser. Indeed, the King of Morocco headed a move to rally the uncommitted Arab States to a neutralist course.

Moreover, immediately after the adoption of the U.N. resolution, the United States urged Israel to effect at least the cease-fire with Jordan lest King Hussein's regime be toppled. After Israeli forces had seized and occupied all Jordanian territory west of the River Jordan, the Israeli Government agreed to Jordan's suit for a cease-fire on the evening of June 7. Egypt and Syria, however, despite military reverses, proved more reluctant to end hostilities. When the Israeli armies reached the Suez Canal and completed their isolation and encirclement of Egyptian units in Sinai, the Egyptian Government announced its acceptance of the United Nations call for a cease-fire, and these arrangements went into effect on the evening of June 8. Although both Israel and Syria accepted the principle of a cease-fire on June 9, fighting continued, and Secretary Rusk sent a warning to Israel that it faced Security Council condemnation unless the fighting ceased. Threatened by adverse United Nations action and alarmed by what Ambassador Barbour reported from Tel Aviv as the "clear signal" of American anxieties, Israel agreed to a cease-fire with Syria on June 10. This agreement ended the six-day Arab-Israeli conflict.

Chapter One

REACTIONS TO SYRIAN TERRORIST ACTIVITY AND TO
EGYPTIAN MOVES AFFECTING SINAI AND THE
GULF OF AQABA, MAY 5 - 22

Reactions to Stepped-up Syrian Terrorist
Activity Against Israel

Friction between the Syrian Arab Republic and Israel during the months of April and May, 1967, precipitated a major crisis in the Middle East. The impasse which quickly developed from scattered acts of violence into a grave international problem was described by U.N. Secretary-General U Thant as more disturbing and menacing than at any time since the fall of 1956.¹

The background of the crisis involved fourteen Syrian-Israeli border incidents during the time-span of April 9-May 8, culminating in two key incidents regarded as particularly serious by the Israelis. On May 5, Syrians used Lebanese soil as a base for a mortar attack on Kibbutz-Manara--the first occasion in which mortars had been used during the Syrian terrorist campaign. Three days later, on May 8, Syrian saboteurs operated on the scene for the first time, placing battery-equipped explosives on the Tiberias-Rosh Pinna road, which is the main north-south highway in northern Israel, seven miles from the Syrian border. An Israeli military automobile was blown up on this road during the evening of May 8, and leaflets signed by the Syrian-backed terrorist organization, El-Fateh, were found at the scene.² Israel thereupon lodged a protest with the Mixed Armistice Commission, in accordance with procedures established in the Israeli-Syrian Armistice Agreement of July 20, 1949.

¹U.N. Monthly Chronicle, vol. IV, no. 6 (June, 1967), p.3.

²From Tel Aviv, tel. 3537, May 9, 1967, secret; I.N.R. briefing note, May 9, 1967, confidential; memorandum of conversation between Lucius D. Battle, Sir Patrick Dean, and Charles Lucet, May 15, 1967, confidential.

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Israel was becoming concerned with the increasing sophistication of the methods used by the terrorists and their launch of aggression from Lebanese territory. On May 9, the Israeli Director of Armistice Affairs, Eliahu Sasson, remarked to an official of the American Embassy, "We're doing a lot of thinking", but said also that it was too soon to confide the direction of his thoughts.¹

The gravity of the situation, however, was apparent without an exposition by Sasson. An American Military Attaché visiting the scene of the highway incident of May 8 found that the local citizenry, an Israeli Defense Force officer, and police officers with whom he spoke were grim and serious, saying "something must be done." Embassy Tel Aviv commented that the forthcoming Independence Day ceremonies, scheduled for May 15, would distract the Israeli Government's attention momentarily, but the Government was under increasing pressure to take counter-action of some kind.²

In the United States, Rodger P. Davies, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, had a conversation with the Minister of the Israeli Embassy, Ephraim Evron, on May 10. Embassy Tel Aviv had been instructed to counsel restraint on the Government of Israel with respect to the current upsurge of Arab terrorism. In this connection, Davies reminded Evron of the U.S. Government's strong interest in the stability and continued Western orientation of Lebanon and Jordan.³ Evron responded that the Israeli Government was fully aware of the fragility of these régimes, and he explained that their instability was one reason the Israelis constantly singled out Syria as the principal culprit in border incidents. He emphasized that Israeli analysts were consistently finding the Syrian Army responsible for encouraging and giving cover

¹From Tel Aviv, tel. 3537, May 9, 1967, secret.

²I.N.R. Briefing Note, May 9, 1967, confidential.

³To Tel Aviv, tel. 191818, May 10, 1967, secret.

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to terrorists. Evron made the point that, if circumstances left the Israelis no alternative but retaliation, the blow would be aimed at the Syrian Army and not at Lebanese or Jordanian territory. In concluding the interview, Davies commented that the United States felt military reprisal would not solve the difficult situation, and he urged that other alternatives be sought.

The following day, May 11, 1967, Gideon Rafael, Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations, informed U.S. Ambassador Arthur J. Goldberg that Israel was sending a very "stiff" letter to the United Nations regarding recent Syrian acts of aggression against Israel. Rafael had been asked specifically to tell Goldberg from the highest levels of the Government of Israel that, if such acts continued unabated, matters would again reach the boiling point. The latest incidents had affected main transportation and communications arteries. They could not be tolerated.

Rafael explained that he had spoken earlier with Ralph Bunche, U.N. Under Secretary for Special Political Affairs, about the incidents of terrorist activity. The Government of Israel was also in the process of urging the Secretary-General to intervene strongly with Damascus because of the dangers in the situation. Rafael's main purpose in seeing the U.S. Ambassador was to urge him to support Israel's diplomatic offensive to prevent further Syrian terrorist activities by appealing to Secretary-General U Thant for actions which would tend to calm the situation. Goldberg replied that he would speak with Bunche or the Secretary-General about encouraging a détente, and would lend the support of the United States to this request.¹

The same day as the Goldberg-Rafael conversation, Secretary-General U Thant released a strong statement on the Arab-Israeli crisis. Speaking at a press conference, he remarked that

"... in the last few days, El Fateh-type incidents have increased, unfortunately. Those incidents have occurred in the vicinity of Lebanese and Syrian lines

¹From USUN, tel. 5624, May 12, 1967, confidential.

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and are very deplorable especially because, by their nature, they seem to indicate that individuals who committed them have had more specialized training than has usually been evidenced in El Fateh incidents in the past. That type of activity is insidious, is contrary to the letter and spirit of armistice agreements and menaces the peace of the area. All governments concerned have an obligation under G.A.A.S. [General Armistice Agreement with Syria], as well as under the charter of the U.N. and in the interest of peace, to take every measure within their means to put an end to such activities."¹

In Washington, the Israeli Ambassador, Avraham Harman, called on the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, Lucius D. Battle on the evening of May 11. Harman had instructions from Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban to register with the U.S. Government the serious concern of his Government over the terrorist issue. Eban's view was that the Syrians were creating a dangerous situation without any attempt at restraint on their part. Harman reviewed recent terrorist incidents, and emphasized that the Syrians were making increased use of Lebanese territory to hit at Israel, were penetrating a region formerly quite free from terrorism (the area immediately north of Lake Tiberias), and were suddenly putting mines on major roads. The fact that there had been no casualties was fortunate, but, as far as the Israelis were concerned, lack of casualties did not diminish Syrian guilt and the obvious intention of the terrorists to include women and children among their victims.

Harman confessed to Battle that he had not yet seen the statement U Thant had made earlier in the day, but he said that he understood it contained very helpful language. Harman noted that the Israeli U.N. Representative, Gideon Rafael, had reported that the U Thant statement included the "very accurate" point that recent incidents showed greater expertise than before.

¹From USUN, tel. 5263, May 12, 1967, unclassified.

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Harman then expressed to Battle the hope that the Syrian Government was under no illusion of being immune from Israeli attack should the terrorist incidents continue.¹

Syria's reply to the Israeli charges was an unequivocal denial of them. Dr. Adis Daudi, the Syrian Foreign Minister, met with the American Ambassador, Hugh H. Smythe, in Damascus on May 13, and reiterated the standard Syrian Government position of non-responsibility for Palestinian guerrilla raids into Israel, whether they were mounted from Lebanon, Syria, or Jordan. Daudi maintained that Syria was not in control of these guerrillas, but that, in the face of a threatened Israeli invasion of Syria, all Arab countries would come to Syria's aid, and a major conflict would surely develop. The Syrian Foreign Minister added that his Government wished to avoid war. He urged Ambassador Smythe to bring Syrian views of the existing border situation to the attention of the Department of State. Smythe, noting the obvious Syrian alarm over belligerent Israeli statements, thereupon added his own verbal counsel of restraint to the words of caution which had been cabled by the Department of State to the Governments of Israel and Syria.²

In Washington, Assistant Secretary Battle reviewed Arab-Israeli border tensions on May 15 with the Syrian Chargé, A. Galeb Kayali, and emphasized the point that recent terrorist activities in Israel had apparently been condoned or even encouraged by the Syrian Government. Battle called the attention of the Syrian Chargé to U Thant's statement of May 11 and asked Kayali to transmit the United States' views to his Government.

Kayali argued, by way of reply, that the Syrians were taking only defensive measures. Israel, he said, was attempting to swallow up demilitarized zones and, through recent public statements, was preparing the atmosphere for attack. Even if there was proof that terrorists came from Syria, Kayali stated,

¹To Tel Aviv, tel. 193481, May 12, 1967, confidential.

²From Damascus, tel. 1135, May 13, 1967, secret.

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the Syrian Government would not collaborate with Israel to prevent these attacks. Shifting the focus of his verbal attack from Israel to the U.S. Government, Kayali asserted that an Israeli assault on Syria could be possible only with the approval of the "great powers". The United States could prevent an Israeli attack, continued Kayali, and, therefore, if Israeli aggression should occur, the U.S. Government would be "responsible" in the eyes of Syrian authorities. Kayali also emphasized that the response to Israeli aggression would not be limited to Syria. He concluded the meeting with Battle with "pious declarations" of Syrian interest in peace and the promise to transmit the United States' views to his Government.¹

Reactions to Egyptian Moves in Support
of Syria Resulting in Withdrawal of UNEF

As reported by Embassy Cairo, U.A.R. President Gamal Abdel Nasser had apparently reached the conclusion by May 14 that the time had come for him to demonstrate the solidarity of his joint defense agreement with Syria by some overt military act. Accordingly, on May 14, Egypt put into effect all measures for the implementation of the defense pact. Field Marshal Abd al-Hakim Amir, the First Vice President, held key military meetings during the day, and the Egyptian Chief of Staff, General Mohammed Fawzi, left for Damascus on the evening of May 14.²

At the United Nations, on May 15, Ambassador Goldberg invited the French and British Ambassadors, Roger Seydoux and Lord Caradon, for a full discussion of increasing tension in the Middle East. All three men agreed to consult urgently with their respective governments on the desirability of asking Secretary-General U Thant to call a meeting of the Security Council.

Goldberg summarized for his colleagues the current U.S. assessment of the situation. Noting that, earlier that same day, large numbers of Egyptian troops had been observed moving

¹To Damascus, tel. 194642, May 15, 1967, confidential.

²From Cairo, tel. 7519, May 15, 1967, limited official use.

through Cairo eastward on their way to the Suez Canal, he stressed the direction of this movement. He stated that U.S. démarches had gone out to several governments, expressing official U.S. concern and supporting the Secretary-General's efforts to maintain peace in the area.

Caradon suggested that further useful steps might be taken in New York. He indicated that, if the reports on the deteriorating Middle East situation were confirmed, he would recommend that the United States, France, and the United Kingdom jointly consider calling a Security Council meeting or else urge the Secretary-General to do so. Caradon then raised the question whether to include the U.S.S.R. in their discussion, in view of the Soviet complaint in October 1966 that the U.S.S.R. had been excluded from similar consultations.¹

The United States also initiated a three-power meeting in Washington on May 15. Under Secretary of State Eugene V. Rostow, calling in British Ambassador Sir Patrick Dean and French Ambassador Charles Lucet, told them that the United States hoped to reassure the Israelis and relieve pressure on them to take unilateral action in response to recent terrorist attacks. Rostow then expressed the hope that the British and French Governments would use what influence they had in Cairo and Damascus to press for a détente.²

On the basis of information, received from the Israeli Foreign Office, Ambassador Harman reported to the Department of State on the evening of May 15 that there were no military concentrations on Israeli's side of the Syrian border, and that the Government of Israel hoped infiltration from Syria had ended. He stated that, as long as incidents were prevented, there would be absolutely no cause for U.S. concern regarding Israeli military action.

Harman expressed the current Israeli Government belief that one of Syria's objectives was to involve the Egyptians in the situation. It was the best judgment of Israel that U.A.R.

¹From USUN, tel. 5302, May 16, 1967, secret.

²Cirtel. 194945, May 15, 1967, confidential.

military activity was likely to be interpreted by the Syrians as being support and encouragement for the resumption of terrorist attacks. Harman added that the Government of Israel had no objection if its assessment was passed along to the U.A.R. Government, and the Department therefore instructed Embassy Cairo to inform the Egyptian Foreign Office of Israel's views.¹

For nearly 24 hours, from late in the evening of May 15 until 10 p.m. the following evening, the Middle East crisis remained unchanged. During the day of the 16th, Caradon met again with Goldberg and agreed that the situation was somewhat less dangerous but still remained serious.

Suddenly and unexpectedly, events took a significant turn. At 10 p.m. on Tuesday, May 16, the Egyptian Chief of Staff, General Fawzi, sent a telegram requesting the withdrawal of United Nations troops in observation posts patrolling U.A.R. borders to the Commander of UNEF, Major General I. J. Rikhye.

There was at first no direct communication from the Egyptian Government to appropriate channels at the United Nations. Secretary-General U Thant therefore called in the permanent U.A.R. representative, Ambassador Mohammed Awad el-Kony, late on the 16th in order to obtain an explanation of the U.A.R.'s intent with respect to the continued presence of U.N.E.F. in the area. U Thant informed el-Kony that partial withdrawal of the Force was impossible. El-Kony then transmitted to his Government U Thant's ruling that Nasser had either to request the complete withdrawal of the U.N. Emergency Force from Egyptian territory or to allow it to remain in its existing positions. The U.A.R. Government decided to demand that the entire Force be withdrawn as soon as possible, and this decision was cabled to the Secretary-General, who, at noon on May 18, released a statement to the press announcing the U.A.R. demand and his virtually immediate accession to it.²

¹To Cairo, tel. 194639, May 15, 1967, confidential.

²From USUN, tel. 5328, May 17, 1967, unclassified; from USUN, tel. 5344, May 18, 1967, secret.

Even before the formal response from U Thant regarding the impossibility of a partial withdrawal had been received in Cairo, U.A.R. forces were seen taking over U.N.E.F. observation posts along the Egyptian-Israeli border.¹ Egyptian takeover of the U.N.E.F. posts swiftly moved the Middle East crisis into a second and more serious phase.

Initial Consultations To Avert a Crisis
Following Withdrawal of UNEF

On May 18, after having cabled instructions to General Rikhye relating to the withdrawal of the United Nations Emergency Force, Secretary-General U Thant submitted a special report to the U.N. General Assembly. This presentation set out the sequence of events and the general considerations leading to the decision to withdraw the Force. The Secretary-General said that he had taken the position stated in the report because UNEF could not remain or function without the continuing consent and co-operation of the host country. Concluding his report, the Secretary-General expressed his deepest concern as to the possible implications for peace of the latest developments in the area. He cited the presence of UNEF on the Armistice Demarcation Line in Gaza and at the International Frontier in Sinai as having been the leading means of maintaining quiet in the Middle East for ten years. Consequently, he deplored the withdrawal of the Force as an act fraught with danger.²

President Johnson, too, was deeply concerned about the maintenance of peace in the Middle East. In a letter of May 17 to Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, he had declared that the United States Government was well aware of the strain being placed on Israel's patience, but reminded the Prime Minister that the United States had counselled against any Israeli initiatives which would add further to the tension.³ Eshkol replied to this letter on May 18, the same afternoon that U Thant was addressing the U.N. General Assembly. The Israeli Prime

¹From Cairo, tel. 7660, May 18, 1967, secret.

²U.N. Monthly Chronicle, vol. IV, no. 6 (June 1967), pp. 3-5.

³To Tel Aviv, tel. 196541, May 17, 1967, secret/nodis.

Minister said that the President was correct in his conclusion that Israel was under great pressure to act against its foes. Eshkol maintained that it would be very unfortunate if U.N. authorities were to give an impression of irresolution in connection with the presence of UNEF in Sinai. He added that ample legal basis existed for the Secretary-General to insist that he could not affect the status quo concerning the U.N. force in Sinai without a mandate from the General Assembly.¹

On the morning of May 18, Israeli Ambassador Avraham Harman telephoned Under Secretary Eugene V. Rostow to say that Israel was still inclined to react coolly to Arab provocations but that the Syrians and Egyptians were engaging in psychological escalation of the situation. Harman informed Rostow that he had been in contact with Israeli Foreign Minister Eban, who had just introduced a dramatic new factor into the situation. Eban proposed that the U.N. Secretary-General visit Cairo and Damascus in order to attempt to quiet the whole situation. Realizing that it would be improper for the Israelis to make this suggestion to the Secretary-General, Eban and Harman wondered if the United States and some others would take the initiative in making this approach.

Rostow replied that the U.S. Government would immediately look into the possibility. While his initial reaction was favorable, Rostow stated that he felt there was always a possibility that the Secretary-General might "bobble the job".²

Meanwhile, a program of consultations with an aim toward a détente had begun between American Ambassadors and top-level officials of Middle Eastern governments. From Amman, Ambassador Findley Burns reported an interview he had with Jordan's King Hussein on May 18. Hussein observed that Israeli's apparent target for an attack was Syria. If Israel attacked Syria, Hussein continued, Jordan would not take action unless the U.A.R. intervened,

¹ From Tel Aviv, tel. 3648, May 18, 1967, secret/nodis.

² Memorandum of telephone conversation between Harman and Rostow, May 18, 1967, secret.

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and Hussein refused to speculate on the precise form of action his country might take. Hussein assured Burns that, although Jordan would have to move in order to keep from being a scapegoat, it did not contemplate a direct armed clash with Israel in the current crisis.

With respect to the future, Hussein told Burns that, sooner or later, his country would be an Israeli target. He was convinced that Israel had long-range military and economic requirements which had not been satisfied, and the only way these goals could be achieved was for the Israelis to seize Jordanian territory west of the River Jordan. In such an event, Hussein maintained, the Jordanians would have to retaliate or else face internal revolt, and he inquired what the U.S. reaction would be. Burns replied that the U.S. Government stood firmly by its declarations and would not acquiesce in changes of the Jordanian-Israeli border by force, although the precise U.S. reaction would have to be determined in the light of circumstances as they developed. Hussein warned that, since other Arab states would not help and the United Nations reaction would be too slow, Jordan would need immediate assistance. Without aid, his régime would fall if the Israeli armed forces remained in Jordan for an extended time, or if they obtained concessions from Hussein's Government as the price of withdrawal.¹

On the same day as the Burns-Hussein meeting, Ambassador Barbour in Tel Aviv discussed the military build up in Israel with Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban. Eban referred to the numbers of Egyptian troops in Sinai, including 600 Egyptian tanks, three infantry divisions, and the equivalent of one armored division. He also called attention to the status of UNEF, which was quite puzzling to the Israelis. According to Israel's best understanding, a U.A.R. order for UNEF to withdraw from Egypt would require reconvening the General Assembly. This step, in Eban's opinion, would be a severe test for the United Nations.

Eban then assured Barbour that the Government of Israel had done everything possible to prevent tension, but in the interest of precaution, he stated, "there will be a buildup here [in Israel] as well". He urged that the United States make it

¹From Amman, tel. 3612, May 18, 1967, secret/limdis.

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plain to Cairo and Damascus that no reason existed for their present military concentrations, and that they should return "not [to the] status quo ante but status quo ante plus cessation of mining and sabotage".

Barbour asked Eban if Israel's Government believed that the Egyptian buildup was essentially a demonstration of solidarity with Syria and no more. Eban replied that, whatever the original intentions of such a display of military might, undesirable consequences could occur. Though it was not the view of the Government of Israel that the U.A.R. intended to make war on Israel, a buildup of such proportions could cause wide ramification of conflict.

Eban then called Barbour's attention to what he called the most important fact in the situation. This was the necessity to convince the U.S.S.R. that it could not control the escalation of the potential conflict in the Middle East. According to Eban, the major leverage to accomplish this objective was to impress the Russians that they were not the only great power involved in the area.¹

During the afternoon of May 18 Under Secretary Rostow called in Soviet Chargé Tcherniakov to inquire about the truth of rumors being spread by the Syrian Government to the effect that Syria had been promised unlimited military as well as political support from the Soviet Union. Rostow added that the United States knew such rumors were inconsistent with the expressed Soviet position, but they were most damaging. Tcherniakov denied knowing of the existence of these rumors. He stated that the Russians were concerned about the Middle Eastern situation, and had stressed their desire in the past that this area should remain calm. He promised to report to his Government that such rumors were circulating. Rostow concluded by stating that he was sure there was no truth to the rumors, but that he wanted Soviet authorities to know of them since they could be harmful in the present dangerous situation.²

¹From Tel Aviv, tel. 3639, May 18, 1967, confidential.

²To Moscow, tel. 197661, May 18, 1967, secret/exdis.

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After Tcherniakov's departure, Rostow reported the substance of their interview to Israeli Ambassador Harman during a call which Harman made on Rostow and Assistant Secretary Battle. At this meeting, Harman indicated that the Government of Israel was in the process of revising its earlier judgment that U.A.R. military moves were only for show. It was therefore increasingly imperative for the Israelis to take precautionary measures in the face of Arab troop concentrations menacing the borders of Israel. In light of this situation, Harman said, it was essential (1) to preserve UNEF and to exert pressure on Cairo to withdraw U.A.R. forces, (2) to recognize the potent effect of the U.A.R. buildup on the Syrians, and (3) to determine the extent of the Soviet role, which he considered the most important need of all. Expressing appreciation for the U.S. Government's approach to the Russians, Harman urged the United States to continue pressure on the U.S.S.R.

Rostow said he hoped the report that U.A.R. troops had moved to Sharm-el-Sheikh at the mouth of the Gulf of Aqaba was not true. Even if this was the case, however, Rostow thought it would be a mistake to initiate any action against such a deployment of Egyptian troops on their own soil. The Under Secretary emphasized that the United States Government would not wish to see the Gulf of Aqaba closed to Israeli shipping, but he advised that nothing should be done until and unless closure was attempted.

In a subsequent conversation with Assistant Secretary Battle, Harman stated that, at the time the Gulf of Aqaba was opened to Israel in 1957, there had been an agreement between the United States and the Government of Israel with respect to the grave consequences of any further interference with Israeli shipping. Battle then emphasized that the important point was not to assume that interference in the Gulf would occur as a result of the presence of U.A.R. troops at Sharm-el-Shaikh.¹

During the evening of May 18, Dr. Mahmoud Ali Daoud, Counselor of the Iraqi Embassy, called on Deputy Assistant Secretary Rodger P. Davies in order to express the Iraqi Government's concern over the recent "Israeli threat" to Syria.

¹Cirtel. 197665, May 18, 1967, secret/limdis.

Daoud explained that, if Israel attacked Syria or any other Arab country, Iraq would be obliged to fulfil its military obligations to the country attacked.

Davies explained that the United States was urging restraint on all governments in the area. He asked the Iraqi Government to use its influence in Damascus to insure full observance of the General Armistice provisions calling for the parties to prevent aggressive acts begun on their own territories from being carried out against other countries.¹

U.A.R. Ambassador Mostafa Kamel called on May 19 at Assistant Secretary Battle's request. Battle said that the existing disturbing situation required careful handling. The United States Government was urging restraint, and there was no indication that Israel was planning an attack on the Arab world. Battle insisted that it was essential for border raids to cease in order to prevent an incident which could start a war. Then Battle expressed U.S. concern at the possibility of withdrawal of UNEF, hoping that it could remain as a symbol of world interest in peaceful conditions between Arabs and Israelis, and that the U.A.R. would re-examine its decision in this matter. Battle urged the U.A.R. to maintain close and effective liaison with the United Nations in the hours ahead and said that time was of the essence.²

Battle then spoke with Ambassador Harman, who pleaded for a direct U.S. effort to reverse the U.A.R. buildup in Sinai. Harman also asked that the U.S. Government do what it could to end Jordanian and Saudi Arabian radio propaganda goading Nasser on the passage of Israeli ships through the Strait of Tiran. Finally, Harman called for a new public statement of U.S. commitments in the area.

Battle replied that United States Government representations to the Egyptians amounted to strong urging that U.A.R.

¹To Baghdad, tel. 197659, May 18, 1967, confidential.

²To Cairo, tel. 198635, May 19, 1967, secret.

troops be withdrawn. He agreed that Jordanian and Saudi Arabian propaganda needed to be muted, and said that the United States commitment, through the United Nations or some other agency, would require careful deliberation at the highest levels of the U.S. Government. Battle added that the Russians apparently wanted no trouble in the area. He and Harman both acknowledged considerable puzzlement as to precisely what was motivating the Egyptians.¹

Battle then met with Indian Ambassador Braj Kumar Nehru and raised the issue of U.S. concern over developments in the Middle East. Because of the value Egypt placed on Indian counsel, and because of India's role in UNEF, Battle told Nehru he hoped that the Government of India would help by counselling the U.A.R. to suspend its decision on UNEF and by supporting U.N. efforts to maintain a peacekeeping role in the area.

Nehru replied that, according to the Indian Ambassador in Cairo, the Arabs did not seem to have any intention of precipitating conflict. Nehru also mentioned that the Indian Government had communicated with the United Nations regarding the withdrawal of the Indian contingent in UNEF.

Battle stressed to Nehru the volatility of the situation in which large numbers of troops faced each other on the Sinai peninsula. Nehru agreed to inform his Government of the seriousness with which the United States viewed the state of events.²

Israeli Prodding for Articulation of
the U.S. Commitment to Israel's Security

During the evening of May 19-20, the Israeli Government made two requests of the United States: (1) that an American destroyer on its way out of the Gulf of Aqaba turn back and

¹To Tel Aviv, tel. 198893, May 20, 1967, secret/limdis.

²To New Delhi, tel. 198636, May 19, 1967, confidential.

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visit the Israeli port of Eilat, and (2) that the U.S. Government take favorable action on Israel's outstanding military and economic requests.¹ The Department of State rejected the request for a destroyer visit to Eilat, saying that in view of existing circumstances, this proposal would not lessen tensions in the area. At minimum, such a display would provide a propaganda horse for the Arabs to ride, and at worst, it could mean the increase of Arab uncertainties. The Secretary also felt this action might serve as a red flag to the U.A.R. on the Straits of Tiran question.²

Israeli Efforts To Obtain a Public
U.S. Commitment to Israel's Security

During the morning of May 20, Ambassador Harman called urgently on Under Secretary Rostow and Deputy Assistant Secretary Davies. Harman said that the Government of Israel was pleased to note that (as Harman put it) the U.S. had reaffirmed its 1957 agreement on the status of the Gulf of Aqaba. Israel regarded this understanding as the most solid agreement between the two governments within the framework of the U.S. commitment to Israel's security. The Israeli Government had also noted U.S. insistence on no Israeli action unless the Egyptians moved to close the Strait of Tiran.

Rostow replied that no disagreement existed between Israel and the United States regarding the gravity of the situation. The Under Secretary pointed out that the 1957 understanding was valid, but should be read in the context of the President's letter of May 17 on the subject of consultation. Should the Egyptians block Israeli shipping, the U.S. Government would expect to confer with the Government of Israel on measures to be taken.

Harman then reported a "disturbing conversation" between Foreign Minister Abba Eban and the Soviet Ambassador in Tel Aviv. The Russian asserted that terror incidents on the Syrian border

¹Memorandum "Summary of Arab-Israeli Developments, Night of May 19-20", from Lucius D. Battle to the Secretary, May 20, 1967, secret/exdis; from Tel Aviv, tel. 3681, May 19, 1967, secret/exdis.

²To Tel Aviv, tel. 198809, May 20, 1967, secret.

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were the work of the CIA, and added, "We have warned you. You are responsible. You are responding to provocation by CIA." Harman said that this statement could be Russian "double talk". Supporting his remark, Harman noted that the Syrian press and radio were trumpeting a statement by the Soviet Novostny Agency that the Russians stood behind Syria and would support her if Israel attacked. Harman thought it was important to "get to" the Russians since they and the Syrians were "pointing the finger". He also stressed the great importance of prompt public and diplomatic reaffirmation of the U.S. Government's support of Israel against aggression. Rostow replied that Harman's request would be at the forefront of U.S. considerations.

Under Secretary Rostow then asked whether Israel knew the French view on the validity of the Tripartite (Anglo-French-U.S.) Declaration of 1950 on the Middle East. Harman answered that he knew the French were taking a serious view of the situation and were making representations in Cairo. Rostow said it would be helpful if Israel could clarify the French position because, if the situation worsened, Tripartite planning would be useful. Harman then indicated that, even though Israel had liaison with the French military, there had been no joint planning.

Ambassador Harman reverted to the importance Israel ascribed to the right of passage through the Gulf of Aqaba, noting that the British, French, and Canadians had been "involved" with the United States in 1957 assurances. Harman stressed the significance of making U.S. policy plainly apparent to all nations. He said that U.S. Defense Attachés had been briefed in Israel on May 19 regarding the danger to Israel of U.A.R. military deployments which were clearly taking an offensive posture vis-à-vis Israel. Egyptian military actions had required precautionary measures on Israel's part.

Finally, Ambassador Harman referred to Israeli's intelligence reports that U.A.R. forces had poison gas and troops equipped with gas masks. He asked for an urgent response to Israel's request to purchase 20,000 masks. He noted that, when gas was first used in Yemen, Israeli Foreign Minister Golda Meir

had remarked that, if Nasser got to the point of using gas on Arab brothers, Israel would have to expect the worst.¹

The important issue of the precise extent of the U.S. commitment to Israel brought key Israeli and American diplomats together in Jerusalem for a conference on Sunday afternoon, May 21. Ambassador Barbour met with Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban and the Director General of American Affairs, Moshe Bitan, at Eban's request. Eban had just emerged from what he described as a long Cabinet meeting. During the next hour with Barbour, he developed many topics, but gave precedence to a coverage of those areas in which the Israelis felt that the U.S. Government could be the most helpful.

Barbour noticed that the tone and substance of Eban's presentation reflected the Government of Israel's rapid recovery from Egyptian surprises during the previous week. The Israelis appeared to be turning from meeting the immediate military requirements posed by the Egyptian irruption into Sinai to the position of building diplomatic fences to cope with the new circumstances.

Eban opened by saying that the situation was better in one respect than it had been: the Israeli Government felt that it had sufficient forces in the south to cope with the Egyptian threat. UNEF's collapse had come so suddenly that the task of meeting the threat to peace and security in the area had put a strain on everyone. Eban said that the Israeli Chief of Staff, Itzhak Rabin, "had been in a daze" for the previous few days. U Thant's haste in acceding to Egyptian demands had been most regrettable. Barbour interposed that everything he had seen from the Department of State and the U.S. Mission in New York regarding UNEF's demise indicated that the United States felt similarly.

According to Eban, the latest Israeli Government information led to the conclusion that the Egyptian action had been planned for some time, and that some reduction of forces in Yemen had taken place in anticipation of it. At the latest count, Egyptian forces in Yemen had dropped down to 40,000.

¹To Tel Aviv, tel. 198916, May 20, 1967, secret/nodis.

Eban said he was satisfied that world opinion recognized Israel's own military measures were purely precautionary. He was in a position as a result of the Cabinet meeting to confirm that the Israeli Government had no intention of taking military initiatives.

Eban then turned to his main point. He said that the Israeli Government had been disturbed because it had not sensed the kind of identification or special support from the United States that it had hoped to receive. His Government was eagerly awaiting a response to the Prime Minister's letter of May 18 to President Johnson. Eban stated that the passage of day after day without some explicit affirmation of U.S. Government support was "gnawing" at the Israelis. Articulation of U.S. commitments to Israel was vital, and its continuing absence could only have grave effects. Although calls for Israel's restraint had come from the United States, Eban pointed out that his Government had been exercising nothing but restraint, and that affirmation of U.S. support was a psychological necessity.

Eban urged that specific articulation of U.S. commitments to Israel should be made to the Egyptians, the Russians, and friends of the United States. Eban's ideas of commitments included general U.S. support for Israeli independence and the specific commitment to freedom of navigation in the Strait of Tiran. Though he said he did not presume to tell the United States Government how to handle public statements, Eban maintained that such articulation should be in most specific terms.

Barbour replied that tactical considerations were important in determining what course should be taken by the U.S. Government. The United States was being accused of collusion with Israel. Confronting the U.A.R. with the fact that the United States was committed to Israel might convince the U.A.R. that certain Arab allegations were true. Barbour added that a case might be made for refraining from revealing these commitments to the U.A.R.

Eban and Bitan rejoined that a restatement of commitments after the situation had deteriorated would be worse than making them plain right away. They said that the most damaging circumstance in the current situation was a lack of clarity.

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Eban then diverted slightly from his main subject to mention that the British and French were providing military hardware to Israel. The United States, on the other hand, in response to similar requests for a faster delivery of equipment, had responded that the timing was not right.

Returning to the question of Israel's right to navigate the Strait of Tiran, Eban dwelt at length on the importance of Strait navigation to Israel, describing it as a supreme national interest. Israel would not accede to a blockade and be cut off from Asia and Africa. There was a basic difference between the Strait problem of 1957 and that existing in 1967. Eban explained that in 1957 the Strait question had been a juridical matter, but that, in the succeeding decade, it had become a geopolitical fact of the first magnitude for Israel. Hundreds of ships sailed the Strait annually, providing vital oil for Israel's economy. Israel's national dimensions thus had been transformed by the opening of this window to the East.

During his presentation, Eban was interrupted by a report that one-third of the U.A.R.'s naval forces as well as a unit of infantry were on their way to the Gulf of Aqaba. Israeli trade ships had passed under an Egyptian position at Sharm-el-Sheikh, but the Israeli Government did not know whether traffic would continue to be unmolested.

The Israeli Foreign Minister then recalled the "solemn commitment" that the U.S. Government had made in 1957, as well as President Eisenhower's assurances that, if Israel would pull out of Sharm-el-Sheikh, it would never have cause for regret. He repeated his earlier statement that, if the U.S. commitment was to have a deterrent effect, it had to be enunciated with absolute clarity.

The Strait navigation issue was of such elemental importance to the Israelis, Eban continued, that they were taking special care about its public treatment. Eban explained that he had talked with a group of the most important newspaper editors in Israel, and had urged them to soft-pedal the entire issue of the Strait. He had also attempted to turn the attention of foreign correspondents from the Strait in an off-the-record press briefing the evening before.

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Barbour interjected that he thought the Government of Israel was correct in not "shouting" about the Strait. He added that one reason the United States thought Nasser had been forced into his recent moves was the public challenge from other Arabs that the Egyptian leader had not been doing enough for the Arab cause.

Eban said that, though the outlook for UNEF seemed very bad indeed, he did not despair that something could be salvaged. He noted that UNEF was still in the Middle East, and perhaps a way could be found to keep it in Sharm-el-Sheikh and other "neuralgic points". Possibly something would come of this during the Secretary-General's visit to the Middle East, scheduled to begin the following day. The Israeli Government had told U Thant that he would be welcome in Israel, but whether he would come or not depended on the results of his visit to Cairo.

Stressing that he was raising the subject on his own initiative, Barbour asked whether the Government of Israel had given any thought to relocating UNEF on the Israeli side of the Armistice line. Eban's reaction was strongly negative. He said that this "strange" idea had been broached by Canadian Foreign Minister Paul Martin, and that it was "absurd". The two problems of Strait navigation and Gaza could not be met from the Israeli side of the line. The real deterrent would be the Israeli Defense Force. The U.N. had lost Israeli confidence as a result of Thant's actions. Eban said that U.N. personnel would be welcome as "tourists" but not as Israel's protectors.

Referring to President Johnson's letter of May 18 as too "consultative", Eban said the U.S. Government should take steps to see that its commitment was believed. Barbour reiterated that various tactical considerations determined the extent to which the American commitment to Israel could be revealed and spelled out. He remarked that this commitment had already been elaborated to certain friends of the United States.

The conversation then shifted briefly to a consideration of the Soviet role. Eban said that the Egyptians obviously had gotten some bad intelligence reports concerning Israeli

force disposition and intentions. He then discussed the current Soviet "line" and the impossibility of talking with or understanding the Russians.

At several points, Eban expressed satisfaction with the French response to Israel's current problems. He said that someone in Washington had asked whether the Israelis thought the French still regarded the Tripartite agreement as valid. Eban stated that Israel felt the French did accept the agreement as binding on themselves, but did not accede to the multilateral framework.

Barbour judged from the whole of Eban's presentation that the Israeli Cabinet had confirmed that Israel (1) would not initiate any direct action against the Egyptians in Sinai, but (2) would do everything in its power, whatever the risks, to open the Straits of Tiran if Nasser made any move to close them, and (3) believed that the United States was bound to support Israel on the basis of the 1957 and other general U.S. commitments.¹

In his meeting with Barbour, Abba Eban had stressed Israel's desire for encouragement from President Johnson. During the evening of May 21, the Department of State cabled the text of a letter from the President to Prime Minister Eshkol. The purpose of this letter was to help moderate the Israelis' refusal to countenance any U.N. observation or peacekeeping activity on their side of the Armistice line. Secretary Rusk instructed Embassy Tel Aviv, in delivering the President's letter, to stress that the United States was certain Israel agreed the U.N. machinery in the area must be revitalized.

In his letter, President Johnson expressed his agreement with Prime Minister Eshkol that Arab terrorism and lawlessness had to cease. He reiterated his hope that Israel would continue to manifest steady nerves and thus avoid further deterioration of a tense situation. The President then said that the Soviet Government's reaction to U.S. approaches had been

¹From Tel Aviv, tel. 3692, May 21, 1967, 'secret/nodis.

encouraging. The Soviet Government, Johnson said, was under no illusions regarding the firmness of the U.S. commitment to counter aggression in the Middle East. These assurances had been made by Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson, and also by the British, French, and United States Governments in the Tripartite Declaration of 1950.

President Johnson remarked that the United States had objected strongly to the Secretary-General's position with regard to the status of UNEF in Sinai. The President assured Eshkol that problems affecting the interests of Mid-East countries were occupying the attention of top-level U.S. officials.¹

Discussion of the Applicability of the
1950 Tripartite Declaration

On the afternoon of May 21, British Ambassador Dean called on Under Secretary Rostow to invite comments on the draft of a letter Foreign Secretary George Brown was planning to send to U Thant before the latter's trip to Cairo. The letter stressed the importance that the United Kingdom attached to a continuing U.N. presence in Sharm-el-Sheikh and to the freedom of passage in the Gulf of Aqaba.

With respect to the overall situation in the Middle East, Rostow and Dean centered their discussion upon the advisability of breathing "new life" into the Tripartite Declaration of 1950. Rostow took the view that the Declaration set forth the correct policy for the Governments of France, the United Kingdom, and the United States to follow. Dean indicated that he would seek further clarification of the U.K. position. He stated that, while the United Kingdom wanted close political consultations with the United States, the Government of Britain did not want to become involved in military contingency planning at that point.

Rostow said that the possibility of a flare-up could not be excluded even though primary U.S. objectives centered on

¹To Tel Aviv, tel. 198954, May 21, 1967, secret/nodis; to Tel Aviv, tel. 198955, May 21, 1967, secret/nodis.

the use of all political means to prevent the outbreak of hostilities. It seemed unlikely to Rostow that the United States could obtain U.N. Security Council action if hostilities did break out; hence, the United States could not ignore the risk of being required to honor previous commitments.

On the basis of this discussion between Rostow and Dean and a statement which Prime Minister Harold Wilson had made in the House of Commons on April 13 that the Tripartite Declaration of 1950 had "not been retracted", the Department of State continued to press for authoritative confirmation from the British and French Governments that this declaration remained the policy of those two governments.¹

Efforts In Support of U Thant's
Mission to the Middle East

U Thant on May 18 and 19 submitted to the General Assembly and the Security Council, respectively, reports on the situation in the Middle East and afterwards decided, in view of the circumstances, to advance his journey to Cairo, originally scheduled for early summer in connection with a visit to UNEF.² He departed in the evening of May 22.

Only hours before U Thant's departure for the Middle East, Israeli Prime Minister Eshkol opened the Knesset's summer session, on the afternoon of May 22. In a policy statement, Eshkol called for reciprocal liquidations of existing troop concentrations on the Egyptian-Israel frontier. He urged a concerted international effort to outlaw sabotage and terrorism against any member-state of the United Nations, and an endeavor to ensure a continuation of the quiet that had prevailed for the previous ten years on the frontier between Egypt and Israel.

¹To London and Mid-East posts, tel. 198959, May 21, 1967, secret.

²U.N. Monthly Chronicle, vol. IV, no. 6 (June 1967), p. 5.

Eshkol expressed the hope that Secretary-General U Thant's visit to the Middle East would have constructive results. In outlining the developments which had led to the tension of the previous week, Eshkol declared that the primary cause lay in the long series of over one hundred Syrian-inspired assaults on Israel. He said that Israel had shown great restraint but recently had been required to take measures for its own defense.

Eshkol deplored the withdrawal of UNEF as an act which tended to weaken the United Nations as "an instrument for reinforcing world peace". He drew attention to the fact that, as far back as the beginning of 1957, Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold had informed the Israeli Government of the understanding that any request for the withdrawal of UNEF would be carried out in consultation with the advisory committee of UNEF, which would decide whether to bring such a request before the General Assembly. U Thant had not followed this procedure, according to Eshkol's best knowledge. The Israeli Prime Minister said that his country had had every reason to believe the demand for withdrawal would be discussed at length in order to clarify all of the consequences which such a step would entail. Eshkol concluded that he hoped "the big powers" would exert their influence to avert the danger of conflagration in the Middle East.¹

In support of U Thant's visit to Cairo and in the interest of encouraging harmony in the Middle East, President Johnson on May 22 wrote to President Nasser that the United States, far from manifesting any unfriendliness toward the U.A.R., was interested in efforts being made to modernize Egypt. Johnson said that he viewed his task and that of Nasser as a responsibility incumbent upon both of them to rescue the Middle East from war. President Johnson said that he did not know what steps Secretary-General U Thant would propose to President Nasser, but expressed the hope that the Arab leader would keep foremost in mind that it was a duty Nasser owed to his people and to the world to avoid hostilities. Maintaining that illegal crossings of frontiers with arms and men would not

¹From Tel Aviv, tel. 3713, May 22, 1967, unclassified.

solve "the great conflicts of our time", the President closed his letter by saying that the U.S. and the U.A.R. shared an interest in the independence and progress of the U.A.R. and the peace of the Middle East. A similar message was sent to the Prime Minister of Syria.¹

At the same time, in a letter to the U.N. Secretary-General, Ambassador Goldberg made it abundantly clear that the United States hoped to retain the maximum possible degree of effective United Nations presence on the ground along the frontiers and points of sensitivity between the U.A.R. and Israel. Goldberg expressed once more the regret of the U.S. Government that the withdrawal of UNEF had been made without adequate consultation with all appropriately concerned governments. He authorized U Thant formally to convey a firm denial of any allegations that the United States Government or any of its agencies were engaged in a conspiracy in the Middle East. Goldberg concluded with an expression of confidence that the important mission of the Secretary-General would have as its main objective the revitalization of peace in the Middle East.²

Late in the evening of May 22, a message from President Johnson was transmitted to Prime Minister Eshkol. The President referred to the fact that he and Eshkol had been in constant touch since the beginning of the crisis. He then told Eshkol that he was addressing letters to the Prime Minister of Syria and to the President of the U.A.R., appealing to them to avoid hostilities, and expressing the great hope that the mission of Secretary-General U Thant would be successful.³

¹To Cairo, tel. 199704, May 22, 1967, secret/nodis; to Damascus, tel. 199728, May 22, 1967, secret/nodis.

²From U.S.U.N, tel. 5399, May 22, 1967, confidential.

³To Tel Aviv, tel. 199729, May 22, 1967, secret/nodis.

Chapter Two

DISCUSSION OF MEASURES TO BE TAKEN FOLLOWING
EGYPTIAN CLOSURE OF THE GULF OF AQABA
TO ISRAELI SHIPPING, MAY 22-JUNE 5

The Closing of the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli Ships

On May 22 at the moment that messages from President Johnson were being transmitted to the Heads of Government of Israel, Syria, and the United Arab Republic and while the U.N. Secretary-General was en route to Cairo, Ambassador Barbour informed the Department that the Israeli Foreign Minister had called him to say, "There has been an announcement by Nasser that the Straits [of Tiran] will be closed and that if Israel wants war she can have it." Eban told Barbour that, at that point, all he could do was transmit the message and say that he thought President Johnson should be informed.¹

Initial Consultations With Egypt

The news from Tel Aviv plunged Washington into a flurry of diplomatic activity. The Department of State sent out instructions and a note verbale to Cairo, and Under Secretary Rostow called in the Egyptian Ambassador to give him their contents.² Rostow told Kamel that the Government of the U.A.R. should understand that the U.S. Government would make every effort to avoid a war or to stop one if it should start. While the United States was continuing to urge restraining on Israel, Rostow pointed out, free use of the Gulf of Aqaba was an issue involving Israel's vital national interest and a right secured by international law. If the report of closure of the Gulf to Israeli shipping was true, Rostow continued, the United States would believe that such a serious violation of international law was an act of aggression. Rostow expressed the hope that the Egyptian action could be reversed.

¹From Tel Aviv, tel. 3713, May 22, 1967, confidential.

²To Cairo, tel. 199710, May 22, 1967, confidential.

Kamel replied that the existing situation could have been avoided if the United States had been responsive to his urgent appeals for help. He suggested, on his own responsibility, that several steps should be taken, including support for the U.N. Secretary-General and the initiation of other U.N. action, urging of restraint on all Near Eastern nations, and enlistment of the diplomatic support of India, Yugoslavia, Pakistan, Turkey, Italy, Spain, and perhaps some Latin American nations. Appeals for the lessening of tensions could be directed to Arab countries such as Iraq. Kamel also recommended that distinguished Americans such as Robert Anderson, Eugene Black, and John McCloy fly at once to Cairo for talks with President Nasser. To Kamel's urging of restraint on the part of U.S. news media, Rostow responded that the President had decided against issuing a public statement. Kamel concluded by offering his opinion that the situation was still controllable.¹

Ambassador Nolte in Cairo informed the Department President Johnson's letter of May 22 to Nasser had been outdated by the closing of the Gulf of Aqaba. Nolte recommended, therefore, that delivery of the letter should be delayed until the U.A.R. position on Aqaba was clarified and that, after clarification, the letter should be revised accordingly. He believed that confrontation between Presidents Johnson and Nasser on the subject of Aqaba was not advisable until the issue was unmistakable, the consequences were fully considered, and the course of U.S. action was clear.²

In compliance with instructions from the Department, Ambassador Nolte met with U.A.R. Foreign Minister Riad on the morning of May 23 to present his letter of credence and proceed with the delivery of the May 22 letter from President Johnson to Nasser. Nolte told Riad that recent events had persuaded him of the extreme seriousness of developments in the Middle East. He expressed the hope that it was not improper for him frankly to set forth U.S. views. Accordingly, Nolte handed to Riad the note verbale of May 22, which assessed some of the grave dangers inherent in a miscalculation on the Middle East situation. He reminded Riad that four successive Presidents

¹To Cairo, tel. 199731, May 22, 1967, secret/limdis.

²From Cairo, tel. 7831, May 23, 1967, secret/nodis.

had committed the United States to act in support of measures to counter overt or clandestine aggression in the Middle East and to support the territorial integrity and independence of all countries in the area. Referring to Rostow's interview with Kamel the previous evening, Nolte stressed that the U.A.R. Government should understand fully that the United States would make every effort to avoid war or stop one if it got started, and that the United States was still urging restraint on Israel.

In response to Nolte's request for clarification of the U.A.R.'s intentions regarding Aqaba, the Foreign Minister said that the U.A.R. would stop Israeli ships and confiscate strategic cargoes of all other vessels. Rejecting the thought that his country would commit aggression, Riad maintained that the U.A.R. would resolutely defend itself against attack. Nolte concluded in his report to the Department that this attitude placed the U.A.R. in direct confrontation with the United States.¹

Initial Consultations With Israel

Having discussed the closing of the Gulf with the Egyptian Ambassador on May 22, on the following day Under Secretary Rostow called in Israeli Minister Evron. Rostow said that Israel's military and economic requests² were at that moment before President Johnson, and prompt response to them could be expected.

¹From Cairo, tel. 7864, May 23, 1967, secret/exdis; from Cairo, tel. 7868, May 23, 1967, secret/nodis.

²Israel had made requests for the purchase of 20,000 gas masks and for a U.S. destroyer visit to Eilat; to Tel Aviv, tel. 198809, May 20, 1967, secret/exdis; to Tel Aviv, tel. 198916, May 20, 1967, secret/nodis. Harman had urged a decision on an "economic package" at the close of his call on Assistant Secretary Battle on May 18, and had said that a "military package" was important for Israeli planning purposes; to Tel Aviv, tel. 198809, May 20, 1967, secret/exdis. See also Chapter I, section on "Israeli Prodding for Articulation of the U.S. Commitment to Israel's Security".

The President had also decided to avoid all public statements on the Near Eastern situation; instead he had sent personal messages to President Nasser, Prime Minister Eshkol, and Syrian Chief of State Atasi making an appeal for peace. The U.S. Government had made a démarche to all Arab governments and the U.S.S.R. on May 23, clarifying the U.S. position on terrorist infiltration, the need for troop reduction, and the right of free passage into the Gulf of Aqaba. The situation had been complicated, Rostow added, by Jordan's breaking relations with Syria over the bombing of a busload of Jordanian soldiers on May 22, 1967.

The Under Secretary noted that the reported U.A.R. decision created the gravest situation and made the closest kind of consultation between the Governments of Israel and the United States essential. The current U.S. inclination was to summon an informal meeting of the U.N. Security Council later in the morning, and to continue to hope that there would be no incidents on either side. Rostow thought it would be wise if the issue of the passage of Israeli ships through the Gulf could be avoided until the Security Council had met on the question. He called Evron's attention to the fact that the United States had discussed the problem with the Egyptian Ambassador, who thought the situation was not irretrievable. The United Kingdom also was taking a strong stand on the freedom-of-the-seas principle, and was operating certain naval units east of Suez.

Minister Evron declared that the Israelis had real doubts as to the efficacy of Security Council actions, especially if the Soviet Union vetoed any recommendations. Rostow replied that any Israeli unilateral action could be justified only after all peaceful measures had been exhausted. Such justification would have to be demonstrated before the people of the United States and the world.

Evron then said that recent assurances which had been given to Israel seemed weaker than President Kennedy's assurance. Rostow replied that the U.S. Government had no intention of weakening the assurances which had been made by Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson. Evron said that his Government was convinced that the Arabs felt the United States would not act, and that Israel would therefore be isolated. The Under Secretary responded that the U.A.R. and U.S.S.R. had been fully informed of U.S. commitments. Evron assured Rostow

that the last thing Israel wanted would be a war, and Rostow again said that all the efforts of the U.S. Government were being directed to preventing just such a holocaust.¹

Initial Consultations With Britain and
Consideration of a Maritime Declaration

Under Secretary Rostow conferred with British Ambassador Sir Patrick Dean on May 22 after the Nasser announcement, and obtained Dean's approval of the position that the United States could "never stand by" and watch the Israelis get "thrown into the sea". Rostow then commented that he hoped the British would "stand with us", since the United States had learned the political risks and tensions which had arisen in both countries from not being together in Vietnam.

Rostow said he knew from a private, unofficial conversation McGeorge Bundy had had in London with George Brown that the British Foreign Secretary was greatly concerned about the situation in the Middle East, particularly the right of innocent passage in the Gulf of Aqaba. Bundy had reported Brown as saying that Her Majesty's Government was prepared to act alone if necessary to protect the freedom of the seas. Rostow, hoping that this was a correct report, also noted that Britain had an adequate force east of Suez to deal with the problem should it become necessary to do so. Ambassador Dean promised a verification; however, by mid-afternoon of May 23, Embassy London had warned the Department that, in view of the personal character of the conversation between Brown and Bundy and Bundy's statement to Brown that the Presidential adviser was in London in the capacity of a private citizen, Bundy's report should be used only with great care.²

At noon on May 23, Foreign Secretary Brown told Ambassador David K. E. Bruce in London that a British Cabinet meeting was to be held that afternoon at 2:30 p.m. The agenda for the meeting included consideration of whether to propose that the United States and other nations should join with the United Kingdom, ahead of U.N. action, in a declaration of intention.

¹To Tel Aviv, tel. 199741, May 23, 1967, secret/exdis.

²To London, tel. 199747, May 23, 1967, secret/nodis; from London, tel. 9769, May 23, 1967, secret/nodis.

to assure free passage in the Strait of Tiran and to concert naval actions to assure such passage. This declaration would be based on the rights of maritime powers in international law.

After nearly four hours' discussion of matters relating to preparing a maritime declaration, Foreign Secretary Brown and his party started out for Moscow for talks with the Soviet leadership on the Middle East situation. At the same time, Brown asked George Thomson, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, a naval expert from the Ministry of Defense, and a legal adviser from the Foreign Office to fly to Washington that night in order to tell U.S. Government authorities the results of the Cabinet meeting.¹

On May 23, Under Secretary Rostow informed British Ambassador Dean that the United States welcomed the proposal for a declaration of maritime powers and for the organization of a naval force in the Red Sea. For various reasons, he said, the United States did not wish to take the initiative by getting "out in front". Rostow suggested that the United Kingdom might wish to approach various maritime powers such as the Dutch, Belgians, Canadians, Japanese, and Argentines, in order to get matters started.

Ambassador Dean commented that his Government would be willing "to join with the Americans and other powers", but his instructions did not indicate that the British would "get out in front". Rostow then said that he thought the United States could work out the pattern of its cooperation on a "join with" basis, and promised Dean he would consult with the Secretary about the possibility of authorizing Britain in her approaches to other powers to say that the proposal had or would probably have U.S. support.

Rostow and Dean agreed that the resources of the U.N. Security Council should be used promptly. They also agreed, however, that the organization of a plan to deal with the situation should proceed without delay.²

¹From London, tel. 9751, May 23, 1967, secret/exdis for Secretary only; from London, tel. 9779, May 23, 1967, secret/exdis.

²To London, tel. 200292, May 23, 1967, secret/nodis.

President Johnson's Statement on the
Middle East Crisis

Only hours before the public announcement of Nasser's blockade, the Department had sent to the White House a statement for President Johnson's use. In general, the Presidential statement released by the White House on May 23¹ followed closely Secretary Rusk's text, which had stressed official U.S. dismay over "potentially explosive aspects" of the Middle East crisis. A significant addition to the Department's text was a section concerning the President's reaction to the most recent element affecting the Middle East situation. Citing the fact that the purported closing of the Gulf of Aqaba had "brought a new and grave dimension to the crisis", President Johnson called the blockade "illegal" and "potentially disastrous to the cause of peace". The President stressed that the United States Government considered the Gulf to be an international waterway of vital significance to the world community. Announcing the firm commitment of the United States "to the support of the political independence and territorial integrity of all the nations of the area", President Johnson said that aggression by anyone in the Middle East, in either overt or clandestine form, had been strongly opposed by the past three Presidents, and such opposition continued to be the policy of the present incumbent.²

Further Talks With Israel Leading to the
Eban Mission to Washington High-level
Consultations

Ambassador Barbour requested Departmental permission to show to Abba Eban the texts of Ambassador Goldberg's letter of May 22 to Secretary-General U Thant and Under Secretary Rostow's conversation of May 22 with U.A.R. Ambassador Kamel. Barbour felt that the Israelis should know of Rostow's statement to Kamel that the United States regarded closing of the Strait as such a serious violation of international law that it constituted

¹See Chapter I, section on "Efforts in Support of U Thant's Mission to the Middle East".

²White House Press Release, May 23, 1967, unclassified.

aggression within the meaning of U.S. Government assurances.. "It would tend to buy time with the Israelis," reasoned Ambassador Barbour, who counseled Rostow that such an affirmation of the U.S. position would tend to postpone any hasty military action on the part of Israel.

Under Secretary Rostow instructed Barbour to consult with his British colleague in Tel Aviv regarding the initial steps being taken by Her Majesty's Government to develop a plan relative to the Middle East situation. Rostow then asked Barbour to explain to the Israelis that U.S. views on the gravity of the situation in the Gulf and elsewhere had been fully and "forcefully" brought home in both Cairo and Moscow. The Under Secretary transmitted to Barbour a summary of his conversation the evening before with Ambassador Dean, and told Barbour that he might draw on this conversation as he chose, but warned him against using "legal formulae", which Rostow thought might be "made to carry too much freight".¹

Barbour subsequently informed Rostow that at an Israeli Cabinet meeting which had just concluded in the late evening of May 23, it was decided to despatch Foreign Minister Eban to Washington, London, and Paris. Eban was to leave at 3 a.m., May 24. A public announcement would state that his trip was being set up for the purpose of participation in U.N. deliberations.

Ambassador Barbour noted that the Cabinet decision to send Eban for consultation followed strong representations which Barbour had made in accordance with Rostow's instructions. Barbour had drawn fully on the report of the discussion between Rostow and Dean on May 22, and he had reminded the Israelis of their commitment to consult with the United States before embarking on unilateral action. The main purpose of Eban's visit, therefore, was to continue such consultation at the highest levels of the U.S. Government. Barbour then stated his belief that upon the outcome of the Eban talks would depend the direction of further Israeli actions, since Eban was not expected to be back in Israel before the end of the week.²

¹From Tel Aviv, tel. 3718, May 23, 1967, secret/exdis; to Tel Aviv, tel. 199836, May 23, 1967, secret/nodis.

²From Tel Aviv, tel. 3746, May 23, 1967, secret/nodis.

Assessment of the French Position

Ambassador Bohlen met with the Secretary-General of the French Foreign Office, Hervé Alphand, during the afternoon of May 23. In their discussion of the Middle East situation, Alphand remarked that matters were extremely serious. He said that Egypt's decision to close the Gulf of Aqaba put an entirely new light on the situation, particularly in view of the various declarations which Israel, Great Britain, and France had made in the United Nations at the time of the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Sinai in early 1957. Alphand felt there was a high degree of possibility that Israel would attack the Arabs if Egypt actually stopped a ship.

Ambassador Bohlen then asked for the French view of the validity of the Tripartite Declaration. Alphand replied that his Government was not taking any position on the question of validity, but that France felt it was a mistake to invoke this declaration. The French Government was all in favor of informal consultations, but not invocation of the Tripartite Declaration. Alphand felt that formal reference to this document would not have a positive effect on the Arab world; therefore, the French preferred to consult without mentioning the declaration.

During the interview, Alphand received a telegram from France's U.N. representative, Roger Seydoux, who said that "non-aligned members" of the Security Council would request a meeting of "the Four" on the same afternoon to consider the situation between Israel and the Arab states and to decide what action the Security Council should take. Bohlen asked if the French would attend, and Alphand replied that French attendance would depend to a great extent on the attitude of the Russians since, if three powers were to meet formally without Russia, such a gathering would give the appearance of a "cold war". Bohlen remarked that refraining from "cold war" would have to work both ways, to which Alphand agreed.

Ambassador Bohlen concluded, as a result of the discussion, that the French were "playing a very careful game" by attaching considerable importance to their relations with the Soviet Union; therefore, they were not prepared to act in a tripartite fashion. French uncertainty as to the Soviet attitude made the

French Government wary of taking any very active steps on their own for counseling moderation and restraint.¹

Soviet Request for U.S. Restraints
on Israel

On the afternoon of May 23, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko received Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson and told him that the Soviet Union considered that war in the Middle East was not needed by anyone. The Russian position was that peace should reign in the Arab-Israeli world, and that the major powers should cooperate to prevent the development of a situation leading toward war. Soviet Government officials had reached the conclusion that the reason for the current tension was the attitude of Israeli leaders in high circles who had developed a militant policy. Gromyko said it was difficult to discern the reasons for the Israeli course. He maintained that all statements were groundless which alleged that Israel was threatened and that other countries were following policies to its detriment. Israel, from the first days of its existence, had pursued, as the Soviet Union viewed the situation, an unfriendly policy toward the Arab states.

Gromyko flatly disclaimed as "nonsense" the Israeli charge that there was subversive activity against Israel among the Arabs. This claim, he continued, bore a strong resemblance to charges that had been traditionally made about Soviet activities against the West. Gromyko believed that "certain nations", including the United States, could exert a restraining influence on Israel. Because of the special relationship of the United States and Israel, the Soviet Government thought that the United States would know what to do.

Ambassador Thompson replied that Gromyko was doubtless aware of rumors which had apparently been circulated by the Syrians to the effect that Syria had the full backing of the Soviet Union. Thompson continued that he felt it would be pointless for him to argue the general question of Arab-Israeli relations, and he said that he would only refer to the fact that, at the time of the Suez Crisis of 1956, both the United States and the U.S.S.R. had shown their good faith. The matter of greatest

¹From Paris, tel. 18864, May 23, 1967, secret.

importance was for the United States and the Soviet Union to address themselves to the immediate problem, made especially acute by the Egyptian action with respect to shipping in the Gulf of Aqaba. Thompson pointed out that Nasser's actions had been taken after the statement of the U.S. Government that it considered the Gulf to be international waters.

As he reported to Washington, Thompson was struck by the fact that Foreign Minister Gromyko did not pursue either of the statements that Thompson had made, but said only that many cables were coming in on the subject of the Middle East crisis.¹

U.S.-Israeli Discussion of the Soviet Attitude
and U.S. Caution to Israel To Await U.N. Pro-
cedures Before Seeking to Transit the Strait
of Tiran

In the late afternoon of May 23, Israeli Ambassador Harman accompanied by Minister Evron, consulted with Under Secretary Rostow. When Rostow said that the United States was concerned about a report that an Israeli ship had departed Eilat at 11 a.m. on May 23, headed for the Strait of Tiran, Evron and Harman indicated no knowledge of this development. (Evron later told a Departmental official that he doubted the accuracy of the report because Israel was continuing to exercise restraint, as the Israeli Government had agreed with the U.S. Government.) Rostow then told Harman that the United States was proceeding with the British, Canadians, and others to marshal support for U.N. Security Council action. The U.S. aim, he said, was to ask all countries, including the U.A.R., not to change the situation which existed before U Thant left New York for Cairo. The Under Secretary explained the political and policy reasons for the U.S. Government's decision to proceed with the Security Council, after a full consideration of Evron's suggestions and discussion the previous evening.

Harman asked about the U.S. démarche in Moscow², and Rostow replied that the Russians had no interest in war in the Near East. The Soviet Government believed all powers should work

¹From Moscow, tel. 5078, May 23, 1967, secret/exdis.

²To Moscow, tel. 199746, May 23, 1967, secret/exdis.

together to prevent hostilities, and claimed that Israel was responsible for the crisis which the world faced. The Under Secretary continued by saying that the Department expected the U.S.S.R. to make a formal reply to the démarche in due time, and he confirmed to Harman the fact that this démarche included a statement on the U.S. commitment regarding freedom of passage in the Gulf of Aqaba.

Harman then mentioned Prime Minister Eshkol's statement before the Knesset that interference with shipping in Aqaba would be a breach of international law and aggression against Israel. Evron joined Harman in an expression of concern over a Tass report Israel had received which declared the Arabs were getting Soviet support.

It was significant from the standpoint of public opinion, Rostow replied, for the United States to exhaust all U.N. recourse before taking unilateral action. He realized the situation was serious, and this sense of urgency made it imperative that no misunderstandings should exist between Israel and the United States. Underscoring the importance of the President's request that the two Governments should consult before either took action, Rostow said that it was in the context of consultation that he raised the question about the report of an Israeli tanker approaching the Strait of Tiran.

Ambassador Harman rejoined that Israel's understanding of the U.S. position on the Gulf was, first, that it was an international waterway and, second, that any attempt to disturb shipping in the Gulf would justify reprisal by the Israeli Government under Article 51 of the U.N. Charter. Harman claimed that this point had been stated specifically to the Israelis by Secretary Dulles in 1957. Rostow replied that he could not confirm or deny what had been said previously, but called Harman's attention to the position taken in the note verbale to Egypt and in President Johnson's statement of May 23.

Harman and Evron expressed concern regarding the time required for consultations, and Harman said that the U.S. Government should be fully aware of the fact that, from the Israeli viewpoint, this crisis did not involve an abstract principle. It concerned a vital Israeli lifeline. Rostow concluded the interview by reminding Harman that U.S. understanding of the

urgency of the situation was one reason for U.S. efforts to get prompt action in the U.N. Security Council.¹

The Awkward Position of Jordan; Responses of Kuwait and Lebanon to the Closing of the Gulf of Aqaba

From conversations which Ambassador Burns and U.S. Embassy officials in Amman had held with top Jordanian leadership before the closure of the Gulf of Aqaba, there emerged the conclusion that Jordan was beginning to feel it was necessary to end its isolation and to close ranks with other Arab states, notably the U.A.R. The events of the previous ten days had taken Jordanian leaders by surprise, and they seemed greatly appalled by the fact that hostilities in the area could engulf them. Jordan felt Nasser was "playing for keeps" and probably had Russian backing. If the Egyptian-Israeli confrontation did not come to blows, Jordanian thinking proceeded on the assumption that the impasse might endure for some time and leave one nation or the other the psychological victor. Quite probably, according to the Jordanian view, the winner would be President Nasser.

Jordan's leadership saw itself faced with problems arising from Nasser's hostility to Jordan, the natural volatility of the Jordanian population which was two-thirds Palestinian, and the belief of the populace that Jordan was so much under U.S. control that the regime in power would never make war on Israel.

U.S. Embassy officials in Amman did not cease to importune the Government of Jordan to exercise restraint. Ambassador Burns advised the Department, however, that U.S. overtures had had less effect in getting Jordan to stop "goading" Nasser to take action against Israel than the Jordanian Government's own natural desire not to embarrass Nasser at that time.²

Among the other Arab governments, Kuwait sent a message to Cairo by its Foreign Minister, Shaikh Sabah, pledging complete

¹To Tel Aviv, tel. 200680, May 23, 1967, secret/nodis.

²From Amman, tel. 3690, May 23, 1967, secret/limdis.

support for Nasser's action closing the Gulf of Aqaba,¹ and Lebanon called up its 5000 reservists even though they lacked training.²

Preparations for Evacuation of American Dependents from Israel and Syria

On May 23, the Department instructed the Embassies at Damascus and Tel Aviv to order the evacuation of U.S. Government dependents when it was deemed necessary. Evacuation from these two cities was to occur simultaneously, with Rome designated as a safe haven for refugees. The Department advised Embassies Damascus and Tel Aviv that dependents should not be evacuated from Israel unless similar action was taken in at least one Arab country at the same time. The Department also indicated, however, that the existing situation in Syria, including stringent exit visa requirements, definitely warranted evacuation of U.S. dependents from the Syrian Arab Republic.³

Further Examination of the British Proposal for a Maritime Group and Declaration

On May 24, in separate interviews with Under Secretary Rostow and Secretary Rusk, the British Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, George Thomson, reported the substance of the Cabinet meeting held in London on the afternoon of May 23 on the subject of the objectives, composition, and modalities of a Maritime Group. Thomson told Rostow of his Government's concern that quick action by the U.A.R. to close the Strait of Tiran could result in a bloodier war than occurred in 1956. To attempt to avoid such a conflict, the British Cabinet had authorized reaffirmation of the U.K. statement of 1957 asserting the rights of free and innocent passage and the intent of the United Kingdom to seek international agreement with respect to those rights.

¹From Kuwait, tel. 1193, May 23, 1967, unclassified.

²From Beirut, tel. 10804, May 23, 1967, confidential.

³To Tel Aviv and Damascus, tel. 200640, May 23, 1967, confidential.

In terms of practicalities, Thomson explained that he carried no papers, but that he wished to convey certain general observations. He began by stating that any action which was to be agreed upon should be international in nature, and not merely limited to moves executed by the United States and the United Kingdom. Both countries should seek to move through the United Nations while recognizing the likelihood of a Soviet veto. Thomson then stressed the need for some kind of public declaration, perhaps reaffirming the statements of 1957, as well as the necessity to contemplate military actions in the region of Aqaba and deterrent actions in the Eastern Mediterranean. This plan would involve escorting of vessels through the Strait, as well as some type of a show of force in the Mediterranean. At the same time, he said, it would be necessary to develop some kind of political proposal that would have a face-saving effect for both the Israelis and the U.A.R.

In response, Under Secretary Rostow stated that the U.S. Government had had intelligence information similar to that received by the British regarding the likely action and reaction in the Strait area. The United States had intervened with the Israelis and had been in contact with all the Arab Governments, as well as with certain other nations around the world. Rostow believed that the United States had pulled the Israelis back from preemptive strikes which possibly would have taken place on May 23. Since the United States had also requested Israel not to test U.A.R. closure by sending flag ships through the Strait, and had emphasized to Israel that recourse should be had to the United Nations, Rostow maintained that an enormous responsibility fell upon the Government of the United States.

On the question of a declaration, Rostow stated that the United States approved in principle but that there were many related problems and questions concerning the practicalities of the idea. It was important, for example, to assess the effect of such a declaration on U.N. procedures. Timing and modalities were also significant factors. There was the question of how to involve the French and other nations. Rostow emphasized, however, that the United States welcomed the British initiative. Thomson replied that the British Government did not wish to get too far out in front in proposing the declaration.

Thomson and Rostow then met with Secretary Rusk, who explained that the U.S. Government would have to explore the British proposal for a declaration carefully and discuss it with Congress. It was necessary to have Congressional support, Rusk said, "before any

shooting starts", and discussions to this end would involve some delay. As a result of his meeting on the previous day with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the Secretary judged that there general recognition in the Congress that the United States could not stay out of the problems of the Middle East, and that the Arabs could not be permitted to drive the Israelis into the sea. However, it was also the consensus of the Foreign Relations Committee that any decisions taken should involve multilateral actions, and that the resources of the United Nations had to be utilized to the maximum degree. In the Committee's view, the more nations committed to support of any declaration which might be developed, the better.

The discussion then embraced the general problem of U.N. involvement. The conferees noted that paragraph 4 of Article 16 of the 1958 Convention on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone might provide a valuable basis for formulation of the Declaration.¹ The Secretary requested that the legislative history of this paragraph be reviewed in order to determine whether it applied to the Strait of Tiran. It was also agreed to review the implications and applications of the Arab-Israeli Armistice Agreements of 1949 and the three arrangements effected in 1956.

After the meeting with Secretary Rusk, discussion between Thomson and Rostow continued in the latter's office, with Leonard Meeker, the Legal Adviser, also present. Rostow said he was authorized to tell Thomson that the United Kingdom, in discussing the question of the proposed declaration with other countries, could inform them that the United States regarded the British initiative as encouraging, was currently studying the questions involved, and was discussing the matter with Congressional leaders.

In the ensuing discussion of the legal implications of the proposed maritime declaration, Meeker maintained that the 1949 Egyptian-Israeli Armistice Agreement had no bearing. Although

¹Paragraph 4 of Article 16 reads: "There shall be no suspension of the innocent passage of foreign ships through straits which are used for international navigation between one part of the high seas and another part of the high seas or the territorial sea of a foreign State."

the Armistice had not de jure terminated the state of belligerency between Egypt and Israel, the United States was not deterred from adhering to the principle of the right of free passage in the Strait of Tiran. Meeker continued that it was useful to note the late U.N. Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold's comment on one occasion that none of the countries involved could continue to claim the right of belligerency. This meant, Meeker said, that the right of free passage would be maintained.

The afternoon plenary session, chaired by Under Secretary Rostow, was attended by Minister Thomson, Deputy Under Secretary Kohler, and others, including Admiral Bartosik. The Admiral outlined British thoughts on military planning, which contemplated enforcing the right of innocent passage in the Strait of Tiran. This plan involved use of a probing force, a cover force, and a deterrent force.

The probing force was to be assembled as an escort to merchant vessels in the Strait, and ideally would consist of a U.S. cruiser with surface-to-air missiles, several destroyers, and a number of British frigates. This force would be vulnerable to U.A.R. air attack and would not have an initial mine sweep capacity.

Cover was to consist of a British strike carrier, HMS Hermes, with its escort vessels then in the Indian Ocean. This covering force was expected to have little military capacity in the northern section of the Red Sea, but it was believed to be a valuable political deterrent by distracting U.A.R. attention in Yemen.

The effectiveness of the probing force would depend largely upon the existence of a deterrent force in the Eastern Mediterranean. This deterrent was to consist of the air strike units of the U.S. Sixth Fleet, plus the British ship Victorious and the British Cyprus bombing force.

In the discussion which followed, Bartosik was closely questioned on the nature of these forces. It was pointed out that the probing force would be very weak, and that a shift to the deterrent force would be of dramatic proportions. The question was raised if the mere presence in the Eastern Mediterranean of the Sixth Fleet and the British unit would be sufficient in itself or whether there would be a political

announcement of the fleet's existence and locations. If the deterrent was used, would the objective be to attack military targets in the Strait or to neutralize the U.A.R. air force? What shipping would be escorted?

Admiral Bartosik agreed that the probing force was weak, but he suggested that the objective of the entire naval operation would be to keep the Strait open and not to destroy the U.A.R. He also noted that the deterrent force was in place but that it would take perhaps the next ten days to assemble the probing force. If U.S. ships were to be used in the deterrent force, they would have to pass through the Suez Canal, a move which might not be practical.

At the end of this discussion, Under Secretary Rostow noted that from the very moment they were speaking, two or three weeks might remain in which to formulate plans and put them into effect. It was therefore agreed that the military representatives would assemble separately and discuss these varied problems, and that it might be necessary for Admiral Bartosik and his military colleagues to contemplate remaining in Washington for several days of discussions.

A draft maritime declaration, produced by the Legal Adviser's Office, had been circulated among the group at the beginning of the meeting. The participants then reviewed the related questions as to whether it would be better to attempt to persuade individual countries to issue separate unilateral statements. The group agreed that if an appeal went to individual countries for separate statements, the result might be that most countries would be prepared to go no further than to make independent statements. The preferable route was one in which as many countries as possible could concur in a joint declaration, which would neither include nor exclude separate U.N. action, but would reinforce the U.N. effort to maintain peace in the Near East.

During the remainder of the meeting, the legal officers present were authorized to revise their draft text in accordance with a series of recommendations made by the participants in the discussion. The Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs, David Popper, reported on the arduous proceedings in the U.N. Security Council, which had met that morning at the request of the representatives of Canada and Denmark to consider what measures might be adopted to reinforce the Secretary-General's efforts to preserve peace

in the Middle East. In this connection, Minister Thompson called attention to the need for additional work in formulating a political proposal designed as a face-saving device for the Israelis and Arabs.

At the end of the session, Under Secretary Rostow expressed gratification for the progress that had been made but admitted, "we have considerable work that must be done." He indicated that the United States might have to support the U.K. initiative respecting the Maritime Declaration in the long run, instead of co-sponsoring the proposed Maritime Declaration. Thomson then expressed the hope of his Government that the United States would act as a co-sponsor, pointing out that the United Kingdom, in view of its past history in the Near East, would be in a difficult position if it had to take the sole lead in this matter. Noting that a Cabinet meeting would be held in London on the evening of Friday, May 26, he hoped to be in a position at that time to make a report. It was agreed that a Joint Minute would be prepared to cover the day's discussions.¹

Consideration of the French Proposal for a
Four-Power Meeting and the Question of
French Aid to the Arabs and Israelis

Ambassador Charles Lucet saw Under Secretary Rostow on the afternoon of May 24 to propose that representatives of the United States, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, and France meet to attempt to solve the crisis in the Middle East. According to Lucet's instructions, whatever the different points of view of the four great powers with interests in the area, their primary aim should be to preserve peace and to make sure no one of them was contemplating any action which might endanger it. The French Government therefore proposed that as a first step representatives of the United States and France meet to examine what could be done to make certain that none of the "parties concerned" would engage in any operation involving the use of force. Subsequently, the four powers could take up

¹Memorandum of conversations among Under Secretary Rostow, Secretary Rusk, George Thomson, and others, May 24, 1967, secret/nodis; memorandum of conversation, U.K./U.S. Plenary Session on the Near East crisis, May 24, 1967, secret/nodis.

discussions of various modus vivendi. The French also proposed that the four powers' representatives to the United Nations meet in New York, with the prospect that the very fact of their meeting would have a calming effect.

Rostow replied that the United States had been attempting to arrange such a meeting, but the Russians were unwilling to cooperate. The real problem, Rostow continued, was not whether these powers would meet but whether they would agree. He inquired whether the French statement that no one should make the situation worse meant that the Israelis should refrain from challenging the blockade or that the Arabs should desist from their claim. Rostow explained that the U.S. pressures on Israel to refrain from sending a ship through the Gulf of Aqaba could not be maintained indefinitely. The Israelis were not expected to hold off for long unless they received assurance from Cairo that Egypt would not exercise its claim of control over the Strait of Tiran. Though any number of formulae might be proposed, Rostow asserted, the basic fact of the matter was that there was no way to compromise on free passage through the Strait. The Under Secretary then outlined the British proposal for a declaration by the maritime powers, and said that the United States thought well of it.

Rostow then raised the question of a report which had been received that the Egyptians were trying to buy wheat in France, and he urged the French to delay, saying that this was no time to slacken pressure on Nasser. As a final query, Rostow asked about the resupply position for French equipment in the hands of the Israeli armed forces should war break out. Lucet promised to look into the question.¹

As Ambassador Bohlen reported from Paris on May 24, the French Foreign Office had sent instructions to its Ambassadors in Moscow and London similar to those which Lucet had described to Rostow. The Ambassadors were to press urgently for quadri-lateral talks to take place as soon as possible. The French had already found the Russians to be most uncooperative, and France was quite disappointed. Bohlen thought the reason for the lack of cooperation was that the U.S.S.R. recognized that

¹To USUN, London, Moscow, Paris, Cairo, Tel Aviv, Damascus, and Amman, tel. 201585, May 24, 1967, secret.

France was relatively unimportant in the Middle East, and the Soviets therefore preferred to deal with the U.S. Government directly.

It was Bohlen's contention that President Charles De Gaulle was going to do his best to avoid the errors of the Fourth Republic in getting engaged in Middle East hostilities. The French President felt obliged to be neutral in his attitude, for France had continued to build up possible "bridges" with Arab states, and would hesitate to throw away these contacts. De Gaulle had also not cut off Israel from a heavy dependence on French arms.

Israel had sent messages to De Gaulle and Couve de Murville requesting French support for the integrity of the State of Israel. Bohlen related that the French Ambassador in Tel Aviv had been reminded of George Picot's statements in the United Nations on March 1, 1957, which underwrote free passage in the Gulf of Aqaba, as well as De Gaulle's June 1964 remark to Eshkol that France would "not ever abandon Israel".

Israeli requests for flights of French air squadrons over Israel had increased dramatically by three per day. Deliveries of military equipment to the Government of Israel had been stepped up, and were believed to include surface-to-surface missiles. Bohlen reported, however, that he did not know whether De Gaulle was aware of the missile shipments.¹

Preparations for the Evacuation of American Dependents from Egypt

On May 24, the Department concurred with a request from Ambassador Nolte to begin the orderly, phased withdrawal of official dependents from Egypt's capital. In light of the fact that open conflict possibly involving the United States would make evacuation by sea and air exceedingly difficult if not impossible, Nolte requested and received permission to order the departure of U.S. dependents, numbering over 400 persons, as he deemed it necessary. Nolte was instructed to inform Embassy Tel Aviv and the Department when the departures were scheduled to begin, so that Embassy Tel Aviv could begin the

¹From Paris, tel. 18989, May 24, 1967, secret/exdis.

simultaneous evacuation of U.S. Government dependents. As Nolte had requested, Athens was designated as the potential safe haven for American evacuees.¹

Israeli-U.S. Discussion in Preparation for
the Eban Visit to Washington

The U.K. proposal for a declaration by maritime powers came under discussion at a meeting between Harman and Under Secretary Rostow on May 25. After explaining the proposal, Rostow interjected that the United States felt that the U.A.R. was quite unlikely to face up to the naval patrols contemplated to implement the declaration and would, therefore, be deterred from closing the Gulf.

Harman said that it was the Israeli Government's position that the United States had made a firm commitment to the effect that U.A.R. closure of the Gulf constituted an act of aggression against Israel. In subsequent remarks Harman also stressed the fact that President Johnson, in his May 23 statement, had declared closure of the Strait of Tiran an "illegal" act. Rostow admitted this characterization of Egypt's act but cautioned Harman against "pushing" the President, who was considering the problem "in a grave fashion".

In further discussion, Harman emphasized that the time for words like "interest" and "concern" had passed. For days, he continued, Israel had been pleading for the United Arab to stake out a firm line on the issue of the closing of the Gulf of Aqaba. Expectations in Tel Aviv were that Foreign Minister Eban would come back from the United States with some action assured, and a new situation would evolve. The Foreign Minister would, therefore, want a very clear picture of what the United States was prepared to do.

Rostow answered that Eban would get an ultimate answer from the President, but the President's answer would have to be that he had to carry U.S. public opinion with him, and he would, therefore, have to exhaust all peaceful measures within and without the United Nations before the U.S. Government could consider taking other steps.

¹From Cairo, tel. 7894, May 24, 1967, confidential/limdis;
to Cairo, tel. 200768, May 24, 1967, confidential.

Harman noted that, if the United States could say it would do "X" when the situation worsened, and then work its way back from the point of maximum commitment, such a stand would perhaps satisfy the Israeli Government. Rostow reiterated that the final answer would come from the President, but he asked Harman whether, if the question was answered to the Israelis' satisfaction, the rest of the program as outlined could be played out? Harman reportedly said that the answer to his question was the "gut issue" and that, after it was answered, the question of timing would be open.¹

The Eban Visit to Washington

Following talks with President De Gaulle and the French cabinet in Paris and with Prime Minister Wilson in London on May 24, the Israeli Foreign Minister proceeded to Washington, where he discussed the Middle East situation with the highest officers of the U.S. Government. He talked first with Under Secretary Rostow on May 25 on the subject of a Presidential statement reaffirming U.S. commitments to Israel. Eban said he understood that it went beyond the constitutional power of the President to pledge his country to a course of action which, under the American system, could only be made by treaty. Eban explained that what he needed when he returned to Tel Aviv was as firm as assurance as possible regarding U.S. intention to participate in the development and execution of a maritime plan.

Rostow said that the plan would undoubtedly go through many permutations and changes as the experts worked it over. Its essential ideas were simple: (a) the U.N. proceeding, consisting of a U.S. resolution in the Security Council approving Secretary General U Thant's report of May 18 to the U.N. General Assembly, (b) a concurrent declaration by the maritime powers, and (c) the preparation of a plan for a naval presence which, hopefully, would be enough to deter the U.A.R. from interfering with freedom of passage in the Strait of Tiran if the U.N. proceeding failed.

Eban said that his principal objection to the plan lay in the risk of being bogged down in an endless U.N. proceeding. He thought that the point of the right of free passage could

¹To Tel Aviv, tel. 202589, May 26, 1967, secret/exdis.

be established by a relatively short exercise. He felt confident that the United States would never be challenged if it announced it was going to exercise its undeniable rights, and left the onus of challenging those rights to the other side.

The Israeli Foreign Minister accompanied by Rostow, next saw Secretary Rusk. The Secretary began his conversation with Eban by noting, as did Rostow, that U.S. intelligence did not support the Israeli position that an attack by the U.A.R. and Syria on Israel was imminent. Rusk urged the view that a U.A.R. attack would be irrational before Secretary-General Thant's report on his trip to the Middle East had been submitted to the Security Council, for such an attack would impose enormous political burdens on Nasser. The Secretary said that President Johnson had wanted Eban particularly to understand that the United States Government did not have authority to give assurances to Israel along the lines of "an attack on you is an attack on us" without full Congressional association with such an undertaking. Such NATO-type language would be unfortunate, he asserted, because of the tremendous debate it would create in the Congress regarding war-making power under the Constitution.

In response to the Secretary's query, Eban confirmed the fact that Eshkol had sent messages to the British and French similar to his message of May 18 to President Johnson. After a brief discussion on this point, the Secretary interjected that the President was not taking Prime Minister Eshkol's message or the Middle East situation lightly.

Eban then said he wished to discuss the Strait situation. He described the attitude in Israel as "apocalyptic", explaining that Israel could not long remain in its present situation, whether or not it was a question of surrender or action. Eban emphasized that it was important that he should be able, when he returned to Tel Aviv, to state that something concrete was being done about the Strait situation.

The Secretary and Eban explored the questions of U.S. commitment and the presence of UNEF in the Middle East. The conversation then returned to the Strait problem. Eban thought it would be useful if the President would send Prime Minister Eshkol a message beginning with the statement, "we are going to open the Straits", and then continuing with a discussion of detail. The Secretary replied that it was important to find out what the various alternatives could yield. He noted that

President Johnson had decided that the United States should complain to certain non-permanent members of the Security Council about their "soggy" attitude on the Middle East situation. Eban replied that with regard to action in the Security Council Israel wanted a "verdict" for a course of action it was already entitled to take, and he cited Secretary Dulles as having thought that the onus should be put on others to come to the Council with complaints if they desired to do so after effective action had been taken.¹

In light of the Rusk-Eban talk and of his own conversation that day with Prime Minister Lester Pearson of Canada, President Johnson wrote Prime Minister Wilson, on May 25, that it appeared the Canadian Prime Minister wanted the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada to stay together, both in their approach to the United Nations on the Middle East crisis and in implementation of the proposed Maritime Declaration. President Johnson expressed his hope "that this track will keep the Israelis steady", but he reported that Eban had asked Secretary Rusk for an immediate application of the U.S. commitment, backed up by a public declaration as well as practical actions. The Israelis desired a statement that an attack on Israel was equivalent to an attack on the United States, and wanted this announcement accompanied by an instruction to U.S. forces in the Mediterranean to coordinate action with the Israeli Defense Force against any possible attack.

After telling Wilson that U.S. intelligence estimates did not support the Israeli claim their country was in imminent danger, and that it would be exceedingly unwise for Israel to strike preemptively at the U.A.R., the President said that he would see Eban on the evening of May 26 and would plan to follow the same line with him as Secretary Rusk had taken on May 25.

Concluding his letter, the President told Wilson that he believed it was unwise, as matters stood on that date, to encourage quadripartism--i.e. consultation among France, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the Soviet Union--outside the framework of the Security Council.²

¹To Tel Aviv, tels. 203752 and 203793, May 26, 1967, secret/nodis.

²Letter, Johnson to Wilson, May 25, 1967, secret.

Foreign Minister Eban recapitulated the broad outline of Israel's attitude toward the Middle East crisis at the opening of a lengthy evening meeting on May 26 with President Johnson, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, and officials of the Department of State and the Embassy of Israel. Since the United States had raised the possibility of a third alternative to avoid implementation of the only other two choices left to Israel--to surrender or to stand--Eban said he had come to the United States to explore the possibility of an international solution.

As the Israeli Government viewed it, an international solution had to take into account the attitudes of France and Britain. Eban characterized De Gaulle's attitude as one in which everything had to be "talked out" between France and the Soviet Union. The Israeli Foreign Minister did not have great expectations regarding French support, although France had been giving assistance to the Israeli armed forces for several days and had "opened its armories" to Israel. On the other hand, Eban observed, the British seemed interested in playing a role on an international basis, but only if the United States was part of the whole effort.

Eban's first question was to determine the extent of the U.S. commitments to keep the Strait and Gulf open, and his second inquiry was related to the nature of U.A.R. intentions. Eban's intelligence services had informed him that the U.A.R. planned an overall attack on Israel. Even though the United States was skeptical, Eban wondered, in light of the possibility that Israeli assessments were correct, whether there should not be a U.S. warning.

President Johnson said his statement to the U.S. public made on May 23 might not have had the effect it should have had. In answer to Eban's direct questions, the President said that the United States would have to await the U.N. Secretary-General's report on his tour of Middle East capitals. If it became apparent that the United Nations was ineffective, Israel and its friends who were willing to be counted, including the United States, could then give specific indication of what they could do. He also discussed the maritime declaration, and mentioned, quite confidentially, that he thought Canada would be willing to provide some ships if necessary. The Secretary General's report, the Security Council's action, and the American Congressional reaction were uncertainties whose full effectiveness could not be measured at that moment.

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The President continued that he was fully aware of what three past Presidents had said, but their statements were not worth "five cents" if the people and the Congress did not, support the President. Mr. Johnson did not approve of Prime Minister Eshkol's suggestion that the United States was re-treating from its former public position. He reiterated his view that Israel would lose support by acting precipitately.

During the course of his subsequent remarks, in which he repeated that the United States would do all it could to relieve the situation, President Johnson emphasized the statement that Israel would not be alone unless it acted alone. Having spoken with a number of Congressmen over the previous few days, President Johnson assured Eban that Congressional support for keeping open the Strait was going well.

Later in the discussion, Eban indicated that Israel was full of indignation at the U.N. Secretary-General for pulling out UNEF without consulting Israel, as U Thant's predecessor, Dag Hammarskjold, had indicated would be done. Eban stated that he hoped the U.N. exercise could be gone through as quickly and as innocuously as possible.

An important point in the discussion came when Eban addressed President Johnson with the statement, "I would not be wrong if I told the Prime Minister that your disposition is to make every possible effort to assure that the Strait and the Gulf will remain open to free and innocent passage?" The President responded, "yes".

Since Eban had wondered why the United States did not accept Israeli intelligence reports of a possible imminent U.A.R. attack on Israel, Secretary McNamara explained to Eban in some detail that three separate intelligence groups had looked carefully into the matter, and that it was the U.S. conclusion that the Egyptian deployments were defensive. All estimates were unanimous, President Johnson added, that, if the U.A.R. attacked, Israel would "whip hell out of them". Ambassador Harman, who felt the need of joint planning, then made an appeal for co-ordinated military activity. The President, while saying that the United States did not want to establish any joint staff which would become known all over the Middle East and the world, told Secretary McNamara to get together with the Israelis and to look into the problem. McNamara then said that the United States felt it was not getting the information which should be

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forthcoming from the Israelis, and that an exchange of intelligence would be useful. It was agreed, in conclusion, that some defense liaison arrangements would be made.

Assessment of Ways To Avoid Direct Involvement
of the Major Powers, and Emboldened Arab
Attitudes

The Department of State despatched a circular to all American diplomatic posts on May 26, outlining two options seemingly open to the United States Government in the deepening crisis. One choice limited future U.S. actions to working through the United Nations and other diplomatic channels, a course which the Department maintained would minimize the possibility of direct involvement by the major powers. The other alternative was the deployment of deterrent air and naval powers, a move which had been under discussion among the United States, the United Kingdom, and Israel as the focus of their major talks during the preceding three days.

Referring to the Department's circular, Ambassador Thompson in Moscow questioned Rusk's statement that limiting U.S. action to regular diplomatic channels would minimize the direct involvement of the major powers. Thompson estimated that the danger of a U.S.-U.S.S.R. confrontation would be greater in the event of Arab-Israeli hostilities than prompt action by the United States, the United Kingdom, and others to open the Gulf of Aqaba. Action with dispatch seemed less risky to Thompson than prolonged hostilities with the possibility of greater pressures.

Evidence of the Soviet Union's desire to avoid direct involvement in the event of Arab-Israeli hostilities came from Embassy Tel Aviv where the Soviet Commercial Attaché, Michael Frolov, had told one of its officers that the Russians believed Nasser intended a show of solidarity with the Syrians by moving his forces to Sinai. In such an event, Frolov declared, "we can stop Egyptian shooting--can you stop the Israelis from running a ship [through the Strait of Tiran]?" He volunteered the view that Arab fighter pilots were not effective because

¹Memorandum of conversation of the President with Foreign Minister Eban and others [May 26, 1967] secret/nodis; to Tel Aviv, tel. 203796, May 26, 1967, secret/nodis.

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they knew little more than how to take off and land. Frolov then asserted that the U.S.S.R. would not participate in a Middle Eastern conflict, but would continue to support its friends in the area of the crisis.

A somewhat sour note respecting Soviet cooperation on the diplomatic front was sounded in Paris when the Soviet Ambassador to France, Valerian Zorin, volunteered to U.S. Ambassador Bohlen his view that the 1950 Tripartite Declaration was no basis for settlement of the Middle East crisis. Zorin then dismissed the French proposal for quadripartite talks because the United States was continuing to bomb Vietnam.

Indications that Egypt hoped very much to get the Soviet Union involved came from Cairo when, in an address on May 26 before a delegation from the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions, President Nasser said that the United Arab Republic was ready for total war with Israel and that he was confident of winning such a war. Nasser's speech contained the statement that the U.A.R. objective would be to destroy Israel. He praised the stand of the U.S.S.R. in support of the Arab States, added that a war with Israel would not be restrictive to the Egyptian and Syrian frontiers, and stated that the Gulf of Aqaba would remain closed to Israeli shipping.

Nasser's remarks fitted in with reports from the Embassies in Baghdad and other Arab capitals tending to raise the possibility for the first time that some Arab leaders were in the process of convincing themselves that the Arabs could defeat Israel in armed conflict if Israel did not receive U.S. military assistance.

The Department regarded such an emboldened attitude on the part of the Arab leadership as a seriously unsettling element. Departmental estimates of Israeli strength concluded that Israel was more powerful than any conceivable combination

^LTo all American diplomatic posts, tel. 202592, May 26, 1967, secret/exdis; from Moscow, tel. 5155, May 26, 1967, secret/exdis; from Tel Aviv, tel. 0672, May 26, 1967, confidential; from Paris, tel. 19320, May 27, 1967, confidential.

of Arab armies, but, if war came, Israel would suffer more heavily than in 1956.¹

U Thant's Report on His Mission to the Middle East and His Appeal for a "Cooling Off" Period

Amidst rumors of an increasingly warlike attitude on the part of the Arab States, U.N. Secretary-General U Thant released a report to the U.N. Security Council on the morning of May 27, soon after his return from the Middle East. Secretary-General Thant reiterated the statement from his report of May 19 that the situation in the Middle East was "more disturbing, indeed, ... more menacing than at any time since the fall of 1956", and then proceeded to defend his decision to comply promptly with the U.A.R. request for the withdrawal of UNEF. He then turned to a discussion of his Cairo talks, an assessment of the crisis, and an examination of possible courses of action.

During U Thant's stay in Cairo, he had had discussions with President Nasser and Foreign Minister Mahamoud Riad, who had explained that the U.A.R. Government would not initiate offensive action against Israel. The Secretary-General reported that the U.A.R.'s aim was for a return to conditions prevailing before 1956, and to a full observance by both parties of the provisions of the General Armistice Agreement.

U Thant had called the attention of Arab leaders to the fact that dangerous consequences could ensue from restricting innocent passage of ships in the Strait of Tiran. The Secretary-General did not report having received any U.A. R. reaction to this official expression of concern.

In his report, U Thant also listed other remaining problems besides the question of free navigation. He pointed out that sabotage, terrorist activities, and assertion of rights of cultivation in disputed areas in the demilitarized zone between Israel and Syria, unless controlled, would almost surely lead to further serious fighting.

¹To all American diplomatic posts, tel. 203788, May 26, 1967, secret; from Cairo, tel. 8075, May 27, 1967, limited official use.

His proposal for a lessening of tensions depended on a "breathing spell" in order to allow pressures to decline from their explosive level. The Secretary-General urged all parties concerned to exercise special restraint, to forego belligerence, and to avoid any action which might heighten tension. He asked the nations involved to permit the Security Council to deal with the underlying causes of the crisis and to seek solutions. Speaking of suggestions for interim measures, he referred to the possibility that the Egypt-Israel Mixed Armistice Commission would provide a limited form of United Nations presence in the area in order to fill the vacuum left by the withdrawal of UNEF. He also advanced the idea that it would be "very helpful to [the] maintenance of quiet along [the] Israel-Syria line if [the] two parties would resume their participation in EIMAC [Egypt-Israel Mixed Armistice Commission] both in the current emergency session and in regular sessions".

Dutch Support of the Concept of a Maritime Group and Declaration

On May 27, the Ambassador of the Netherlands, Carl W. A. Schurmann, assured Under Secretary Rostow that the Government of the Netherlands fully supported Israel's right of free passage through the Strait of Tiran. Schurmann told Rostow that, if an international group of maritime powers decided to take action to assert the right of free passage, the Government of the Netherlands stood ready to participate with ships.

Rostow welcomed this information and said the President would be pleased to hear of the Netherlands' position. He informed Schurmann of the three-sided approach being considered by the U.S. Government: (1) working through the Security Council, (2) attempting to enlist international support for a maritime declaration, and (3) organizing a contingency plan for a small international naval presence in the Red Sea, ready to escort vessels through the Strait. On the third point, Schurmann commented that such a force might have to stay in the area indefinitely. Rostow agreed, but he said such a stay would be better than hostilities and might, in fact, become the only way of averting warfare. The Under Secretary continued that an Israeli naval vessel might join the squadron and itself escort

¹From USUN, tel. 5494, May 27, 1967, unclassified.

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Israeli ships through the Strait with other vessels standing by. In addition, there would be the U.S. Sixth Fleet augmented by ships of other nations to back up the Red Sea naval presence in the Mediterranean.

Schurmann stated that, on the basis of his instructions, he was certain that his Government would participate in the proposed escort squadron. Rostow again expressed U.S. pleasure, and said that, in view of the Israeli Cabinet meeting scheduled for May 28, the Netherlands Government should urgently convey its position to Tel Aviv since such backing would be helpful in making the Israelis believe they had international support.

Schurmann asked what the United States planned to do if an outbreak of hostilities occurred. Rostow replied that the U.S. Government had told the Israelis that they would not be alone if they did not initiate war, and he gave Schurmann the essence of Eban's remark that the French had "opened their armories" to the Israelis in their moment of emergency. In concluding the meeting, Rostow told Schurmann that the Department was about to set up an international working group to map out the details of the naval force idea and said he would extend an invitation to Ambassador Schurmann to send political and military representatives.

British Concern To Speed U.N. Action To
Forestall Unilateral Israeli Forcing of
the Strait of Tiran

While the United States was welcoming Dutch support of measures under consideration for opening the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping, London expressed concern lest Israel force the issue prematurely. In acknowledging receipt of the full texts of Eban's talks with top-level Government leaders in Washington on May 25 and 26, Prime Minister Wilson addressed President Johnson on the subject of a possible Israeli "ultimatum". Wilson felt it was likely that the Israeli Cabinet could say to both Britain and the United States that, if Israel did not obtain even more categorical assurances than it had been given regarding the Strait of Tiran, the Israelis would feel obliged to assert their right of free passage by force in in whatever manner and at whatever time would seem most appropriate.

¹To Tel Aviv, tel. 203891, May 27, 1967, secret/nodis.

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Wilson expressed pleasure with the progress George Thomson and U.S. Government officials had made, and he emphasized that the United States and Britain should try to develop the proposed maritime plan on the widest possible basis of international cooperation, "even if you and we are going to have to do most of the donkey work." Wilson stressed the need to avoid any appearance that either the United States or Britain were taking sides. Other nations, he said, would be persuaded to join an international effort only if they were thoroughly convinced that U.N. possibilities had been exhausted. Part of the effort would be to get the Russians involved on a four-power basis, though Wilson admitted that the governments concerned probably would not be able to make the Russians face up to their responsibilities and help to prevent a really dangerous confrontation.

In an effort to try to get the Russians to join in attempting to prevent a catastrophe, Wilson informed the President that he had dispatched a letter to Chairman Kosygin, inviting him to get Federenko to meet with Goldberg. Seydoux, and Caradon, in a Security Council context, "to see whether it really is impossible for them to hammer out something which could make sense in this crazy Middle East situation." Wilson reported that Foreign Secretary George Brown had come back from Moscow convinced the Russians realized the gravity of the situation, and Wilson thought the time was right for at least a try. Should both the Security Council and a four-power approach fail, Wilson felt, there would be enough countries in the world with the sense to realize that world peace was more important than trying to go on working through an "impotent" United Nations, and that these nations would have "the guts to stand up and be counted". The Prime Minister commented further that he had kept scrupulously in mind President Johnson's reservations about four-power activities outside the U.N. framework; thus no mention had been made by the United Kingdom to Kosygin about any four-power action anywhere else or at any other level.

Although Wilson remarked that he had heard nothing from the French, he did acknowledge learning that the Russians had made an approach to the United States. Noting that the President was sending a letter to Eshkol, Wilson said he did not feel an additional personal message of his own to the Israeli Prime Minister would be necessary. The British Ambassador in Israel had been instructed, in the light of a "somewhat ominous" remark

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made to George Thomson by the Israeli Ambassador in London, to press the Israeli Government to maintain its policy of restraint while international efforts to find a solution were continuing.¹

U.S. Israeli Exchanges and the Israeli Cabinet Decision Not To "Go It Alone" in the Middle East Crisis

Indications of Israeli restiveness of the kind which disturbed the British Government were reported from Tel Aviv by Ambassador Barbour. Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol held continuous sessions with his cabinet colleagues and military advisers on the morning of May 27. A representative of the Israeli Foreign Office called Ambassador Barbour urgently to ask if the Embassy had received a report of Eban's conversation with President Johnson, for the Israeli Government had received no information regarding this discussion. Barbour judged the situation to be critical and called at the Israeli Defense Ministry, where he imparted to Director General Levavi of the Foreign Office the substance of Eban's conversations with the President and Under Secretary Rostow. Levavi immediately passed this information on to Prime Minister Eshkol.

Barbour remarked that the Israelis took the occasion of his meeting with them to embark on an emotional but evidently sincere exposition of their conclusion that Nasser had "crossed his Rubicon", and that a surprise aerial attack on Israel could be expected at any moment. Barbour's repeated remonstrances to the country were met by the argument that U.S. intelligence was much less recent than information the Israelis had received in the past few hours. Israeli officials talked in terms of a surprise air strike knocking out their airfields and rendering a response ineffective. Four MIG aircraft had overflown Israel the day before without the Israeli air force's being able to intercept them.

Levavi read to Barbour a note received in the evening of May 26 from the Soviet Ambassador. The note advised caution and said the Russians did not want war in the Middle East. This was not, Levavi added, what the Egyptian War Minister at Moscow

¹To London, tel. 203986, May 27, 1967, secret/nodis.

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was telling Cairo. The Soviet note seemed to Barbour to be mild in tone as well as sound in content. He asked if the Soviet Ambassador had indicated that a similar message had been sent to Nasser, and, when the Israelis replied they did not know, Barbour remarked that he thought such a message had probably been sent to the Egyptian President. Barbour re-emphasized to Levavi President Johnson's statement to Eban that the Israelis would not be alone unless they acted alone, and he obtained the impression that the Israelis would await Eban's arrival with a full report before they took any action. The broadest impression Barbour received was that Israeli's Government remained unconvinced that Nasser would not strike first. If Nasser was to attack, Israeli officials believed they would likely be lost, because they possessed no secondary response capability. Levavi did say he believed that, if the United States would dispatch a military officer to talk with the Israelis in terms of U.S. estimates and capabilities, Israeli Defense Force apprehensions might be considerably lessened. Barbour recommended to the Department that the United States send such an officer. He added that, while Eban might be able to provide the voice of reason, the balance in the Israeli Government situation was so critical that the additional exercise would be worth the effort.¹

In Washington in an interview with Under Secretary Rostow on the 27th, Ambassador Harman asked if the United States was firm on the right of Israeli flag shipping to pass through the Strait of Tiran. Rostow replied that Harman had heard what U.S. officials had said on this question during Eban's visit, and he added that the United States had received affirmative responses from the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Canada respecting formation of a maritime escort. The Under Secretary also remarked that the United States Government was working out a tentative scenario over the weekend.

Rostow noted that the purpose of the escort force was merely to show the flag. The ultimate guarantee for the safety of this force was the U.S. Sixth Fleet and vessels from other maritime powers stationed in the Mediterranean. The general direction of U.S. thinking was to get the Maritime Declaration out and continue planning to assemble a naval presence, but not

¹From Tel Aviv, tel. 3808, May 27, 1967, top secret/ nodis.

to surface it until Security Council action had reached a certain point two or three weeks later. Under Secretary Rostow reiterated the necessity for the U.S. Government to consult with Congress and to mobilize public support for its position.

Harman then expressed concern at the idea of two or three weeks' delay, for actions were beginning to take place on the ground. Such actions were part of the overall situation, and Harman felt it was time for a quick response.

Rostow stated that, when Foreign Minister Eban had asked if it was the U.S. Government's position to pursue the British initiative vigorously, he had received an affirmative answer. Harman said that he had been asked for a detailed appraisal of the U.S. position, and wanted to use the word "determination". Rostow replied that the words which had been used were "fealty to prior commitments" and "determination", but that problems of the U.S. Constitutional process and the necessity of gaining public support had been clearly explained to Israeli representatives.

Several hours after this conversation, Under Secretary Rostow called in Ambassador Harman and explained that the United States Government had just received an important message from the Russians, phrased not as a threat but as an appeal. Russian observers claimed to have information that an Israeli attack was imminent. They had appealed to the United States to use its good offices to prevent the Israeli attack. Rostow also indicated that the Soviet message had manifested a desire to use Soviet influence to restrain the Arabs. On the basis of these representations, Rostow informed Harman that the United States had forwarded an urgent message to the Israelis, again stressing the importance of the fact that the Israeli Government should not make the first military move.¹

The urgent message took the form of a letter from President Johnson to Prime Minister Eshkol relating that the United States had information that the Israelis were preparing to take military action against their Arab neighbors and provoke conflict. This information had come to the President in a private message from

¹To Tel Aviv, tel. 203966, May 27, 1967, secret/nodis.

Chairman Kosygin, who had emphasized Russia's commitment to restrain but warned that, if Israel began military action, the Soviet Union would give aid to those countries which suffered attack. President Johnson repeated his statement of the previous day to Foreign Minister Eban calling upon Israel not to initiate hostilities.

Secretary Rusk, in a note verbale appended to the text of his letter, assured Eshkol that the United States and the United Kingdom were working urgently upon the military aspects of a Naval escort plan, and that other nations, such as the Netherlands and Canada, had already joined before the details of the plan had been presented to them.¹

Despite such assurances, however, the Israeli Government continued to be concerned about the time element involved. In a discussion with Ambassador Barbour on May 28, Moshe Bitan of the Israeli Foreign Office emphasized that the crisis was not over, and that an essential factor involved in the resolution of the crisis would be how well the United States and Israel were to cooperate over the period of the next few weeks. A problem of the first magnitude was that of the Strait, and the second major issue was the posture of Nasser in Sinai. Bitan remarked that, if major terrorism was mounted from the Sinai or the Gaza strip, the Israelis eventually would have to stop it. He said they felt they could defeat Nasser and would have to do it if there was no other way to end the terrorist attacks.

Bitan continued that the Israelis were prepared to wait another few weeks but were maintaining mobilization at the top level, a position of readiness which could not be continued indefinitely without serious economic effect on Israel. As had Eban and others, Bitan urged the United States to pay the most careful attention possible to Security Council developments, since, if matters were to go wrong at the United Nations, the entire scenario could be destroyed or impossibly delayed.²

¹To Tel Aviv, tel. 203943, May 27, 1967, top secret/eyes only for Ambassador; letter, Kosygin to Johnson, May 27, 1967, secret/nodis.

²From Tel Aviv, tel. 3834, May 28, 1967, top secret/nodis.

The Eshkol government was also eager to give some assurances to the Israeli people to explain the delay in military action against the Arab States. The draft of an Israeli statement consisting of seven paragraphs, intended for inclusion in a speech the Prime Minister planned to deliver in the Knesset, was transmitted from Embassy Tel Aviv to the Department on May 28. The statement included remarks on the purpose of Foreign Minister Eban in visiting the President of France, the Prime Minister of Britain, and the President of the United States; it was also to explain Israeli's vital national interest, to include some of the language from U.S. and U.K. public statements, and to make reference to U.S. commitments.

The Department's most immediate reply to Embassy Tel Aviv was an expression of concern that Eshkol's statement in the Knesset might draw on language used in the talks Eban had held in Washington. Secretary Rusk gave Ambassador Barbour instructions to tell the Israelis that the United States believed the best posture from which it could help Israel would be to stand on principles set forth in the President's public statement of May 23.

In a subsequent telegram, the Department revised the Israeli draft, which stated in one paragraph that President Johnson had displayed an "unambiguous attitude" and "forceful determination" in his policy of assuring free passage. The Department's revision asserted that it was the policy of the United States, as expressed by President Johnson in his speech of May 23, to assure free passage in the Strait of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba. The Department deleted a portion of the draft paragraph referring to the consultations of the maritime powers with the United States and the United Kingdom, on the ground that some of the maritime powers had not been consulted because of the haste and pressure of the previous few days.

Consideration of the proposed Israeli public statement on policy in the crisis was interrupted on the 29th when Ambassador Barbour met with Foreign Minister Eban to learn what would follow from a decision taken by the Israeli Cabinet on the preceding day not to "go it alone". Eban stated that the Cabinet ruling had been made decisively, in a closely-balanced situation, on the basis of both the message from Johnson to Eshkol received that same morning, and Eban's report of his conversations with the President. Both the members of the Cabinet and certain other leading Israeli political figures had favored the U.S.

position, but Eban sensed that the uninformed public in Israel was becoming increasingly uneasy as to just where Israel stood in the diplomatic arena. Eban expressed his views that, while he did not advocate any public revelation of the results of his Washington conversations, he would appreciate it if anything could be done in the background to reemphasize the President's determination expressed in his May 23 statement.

Turning to a consideration of the proceedings in the U.N. Security Council on the Middle East crisis, Eban said he could not urge too strongly that the United States avoid introducing any resolution on the legal rights of free and innocent passage through the Strait of Tiran. He felt that any effort to discuss such a resolution would inevitably give Israel's opponents an opportunity to becloud and weaken the essential impression of world support for such legal rights. Instead of discussing the resolution, he said, the United States should follow the 1957 General Assembly procedure of tabling a declaration by those powers willing to agree on the legal validity of the right of free and innocent passage through the Strait. A general Security Council resolution in favor of peace and tranquility would be acceptable to Israel, provided its negotiation did not unduly protract Security Council deliberations. Eban said he was thinking of making a trip to New York so that he could make Israel's case personally, but he felt that such a move could be publicly misunderstood in Israel as suggesting too much reliance on the United Nations.

Eban also explained that, in line with a request made of Eban in Washington that the Israeli Government should use its efforts to enlist the support of other governments, Ambassador Michael S. Comay, former Israeli Representative to the United Nations, would embark on a visit to several countries on the morning of May 30. Since the Israelis had not been fully informed as to the exact state of the consultations between the United States, the United Kingdom, and other governments, and did not wish to cross purposes with them, Ambassador Harman in Washington had been instructed to ascertain U.S. ideas as to where and how Comay could make the most useful contribution. Eban added that Comay would proceed to the Hague, for the Netherlands had already been in direct touch with the Government of Israel.

The Israeli Foreign Minister then spoke of the tense situation in the Sinai, and voiced the hope that the Russians could persuade Nasser of the necessity of thinning out his troop

concentrations, in which case Israel would offer a parallel pullback. Eban expressed willingness to accept the U.S. conclusion that a U.A.R. attack was not imminent, but warned that there was still danger of a full-scale surprise attack by Nasser. It was consequently essential that everything possible should be done to assure the maximum amount of U.S.-Israeli liaison for intelligence and contingency planning purposes.¹

During the late evening of May 29, on the basis of fresh instructions from Washington, Ambassador Barbour returned to the question of the remarks Prime Minister Eshkol proposed to make to the Knesset on the Middle East crisis. Barbour informed Bitan that the United States believed the best posture of both Israel and the United States was to stand on the principles of the President's May 23 speech. Bitan then advised Barbour that Eshkol and Eban fully agreed, and had no intention of any public revelation or discussion of Eban's Washington talks.

Regarding the elimination of language denoting the President's approach, Bitan expressed doubt that Eban would accept the removal of the reference to the President's own attitude. Bitan made the point that Eban, in reporting to the Israeli Cabinet, not only stressed the substance of his conversation with the President but also gave his assessment of the President's forceful attitude. It was Eban's belief that his account of the President's personal reaction might well have been one of the most decisive factors in the extremely finely-balanced Cabinet considerations. Even though the original language of the Prime Minister's proposed remarks might invite questions at least bordering on the contents of the conversation between the President and Eban, Bitan felt that the minimum reference should be made and then later Eban could avoid elaboration. He agreed to deletion of the clause making reference to consultations among the maritime powers which in point of fact had not taken place.

Barbour and Bitan then discussed the inclusion of a further U.S. suggestion. While speaking of action which was expected to take place in support of the Maritime Declaration, the Israeli draft statement did not include the idea of seeking or obtaining

¹From Tel Aviv, tel. 3857, May 30, 1967, top secret/nodis.

such action within the context of U.N. activity. The Department had made the suggestion to include the idea of action "if possible within the United Nations". Bitan replied that, in his judgment, the suggested phrase would be completely unacceptable to the Prime Minister, since a reference to the United Nations in the current atmosphere would invoke derision. Barbour argued that the use of the words "if possible" clearly suggested U.S. doubts as to the effectiveness of the United Nations and implied that the United States was contemplating additional courses, but he did not convince Bitan of this point.

Later, after discussing with Eban the points which the U.S. had made, Bitan informed Barbour that the Israelis were working to replace their precise language with a vaguer reference to the impression Eban received "during conversations in Washington and from the President's statement of May 23". Eban accepted deletion of the phrase referring to consultations of maritime powers with the United States and the United Kingdom, but, as expected, he did not accept the insertion of a reference to the United Nations. The Department then approved of the changes as Barbour reported them, and Eshkol's speech was delivered at 4:00 p.m. on May 29.

¹From Tel Aviv, tel. 3835, May 28, 1967, corrected May 29, 1967, secret/exdis; to Tel Aviv, tel. 204010, May 28, 1967, secret/nodis; to Tel Aviv, tel. 204024, May 28, 1967, secret/nodis; from Tel Aviv, tel. 3840, May 29, 1967, secret/nodis; from Tel Aviv, tel. 3844, May 29, 1967, secret/nodis; to Tel Aviv, tel. 204040, May 29, 1967, secret/nodis.

Embassy Beirut's Recommendation that the
United States Avoid Commitment to Israel

Ambassador Porter in Beirut emphasized his belief, in a telegram to the Department on May 29, that any attempt on the part of the United States to support Israel's position regarding the Strait of Tiran would be viewed by the Arabs as a hostile act. If aid was carried to the point of providing military support for the Israeli position, even under the U.N. flag, drastic and perhaps irretrievable losses of U.S. political and commercial advantages could occur. According to Porter, the U.S. goal should have been a solution to avoid clear-cut U.S. support for Israel and, at the same time, to provide Israel with the means to salvage the maximum from the current situation.

Porter thought that, even if Israel could win a war with the U.A.R. and survive under seriously weakened conditions, it could no longer depend upon U.S. influence in the area to help protect its interests and continued survival. Israel would have to continue, he said, in a hostile world in which U.S. influence had been largely replaced by the Soviet Union. Israel's chances of survival would be dim, and the Arabs, sensing this weakness, would be less likely to accept the political compromise the Israelis might then offer.

Porter believed that the only way to avoid the extremes of a difficult situation would be to keep the dispute in a discussion stage within or outside of the United Nations and to seek compromise solutions at the same time. He emphasized that the United States was unaware of the price each of the disputing nations would be willing to pay to avoid all-out war, assuming that the U.A.R. was not completely bent on war.

Examining the problems of mobilization as they affected Arab countries, Ambassador Porter stated that the longer Arab armies were kept in a high state of readiness for the expected war with Israel, the more tired and perhaps less disposed to make war they would become. At the same time, the cost of the entire effort would become increasingly burdensome to Nasser and his allies. These facts in themselves might serve as a deterrent to the U.A.R. to pursue war against the Israelis. In addition, Nasser's prestige might be somewhat dimmed by a lengthy extension of discussions, when many Arabs were convinced that the Holy War to annihilate the Israelis was at hand.

In the eyes of Embassy officials in Lebanon, one of the many puzzling features of the situation was the Russian role and attitude during the crisis. Though the Russians had told Embassy Beirut that they had not promised military support to the Egyptians in the event of war, and that they had been surprised by Nasser's move to close the Gulf of Aqaba, Embassy Lebanon failed to see any reason why it had to be assumed the Russians were telling the truth. It appeared to Porter that Russian interests had been best served by forcing the United States into the position of supporting the Israelis in their dispute, and that all Russian advice being given to the Egyptians was geared to accomplishing the expected result. Porter maintained that the Russian plan had worked beautifully. Since the United States had announced its support for the Israeli position on Aqaba, it had been faced with the dilemma of whether to try to force the opening of the Strait of Tiran of Israeli shipping or merely to threaten to do so. Abrupt polarization of the issue was, therefore, no accident, and the Aqaba issue was chosen because of its controversial nature in international law and the magnetic effect it would have on the rest of the Arab world. Ambassador Porter seriously doubted if legalistic arguments on the Gulf of Aqaba issue would have any effect on Arab opinion. The Arabs, he said, would not be convinced that the United States Government was seriously concerned over the legal aspect of the matter affecting Israel. As one Lebanese friend had suggested to Porter, "Would the United States be as concerned over the issue if it were Jordan's port of Aqaba that was affected?"

Porter concluded that, if the U.S. decision was based upon its effect on U.S. interests in the area, the United States could not be in real or apparent opposition to the Arab position, and could not serve Israeli interests. He expressed the hope that the Department could make Israel understand that the United States would not be able to do much to preserve Israel's welfare and national integrity in a bitter and hostile Arab world from which the United States had been driven out because of Washington's own actions. He said that the only hope which the United States had of contributing to a peaceful solution was to remain honestly uncommitted so that U.S. influence ultimately could be brought to bear on both sides.¹

¹From Beirut, tel. 11018, May 29, 1967, secret/exdis.

U.S. Study of How To Cope with a Middle East War, of Probable Economic Consequences of Forcibly Opening the Gulf of Aqaba, and of the Legality of Egypt's Closing of the Gulf

By the end of May, faced with the strong possibility of a Middle East war, the United States stepped up its consideration of what to do in such an event, as well as of measures which might be taken within the framework of international law to open the Gulf of Aqaba, thereby removing one immediate possible cause of hostilities. The organization to undertake such an extensive survey was already in existence. On May 23, the day after the United Arab Republic had closed the Strait of Tiran, a Middle East Control Group had been established, with Under Secretary Rostow as chairman (since May 18, Rostow had been serving as the principal officer in the Department of State designated by the Secretary to follow the developing Arab-Israeli crisis). The other members of the Control Group were the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Cyrus R. Vance, the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Foy D. Kohler, Assistant Secretary Battle, and the Deputy Executive Secretary of the Department, John P. Walsh. The membership was subsequently expanded to include Ambassador-at-Large W. Averell Harriman and a representative of the Central Intelligence Agency. A number of Assistant Secretaries and other officials joined the Group from time to time for consultation in their particular areas of competence.

Also on May 23, a formal Working Group was set up under the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, Rodger P. Davies, with representatives of the geographical and functional bureaus, the White House, the Department of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the CIA. On May 31, the Working Group was converted into a Task Force, with Assistant Secretary Battle as chairman and Davies as vice chairman. The Working Group and, later, the Task Force, together with their subcommittees, did the ground work for the Control Group.¹

¹Information concerning the formation of the Control Group, the Working Group, and Task Force, and their subordinate bodies, was obtained in an interview by H.B. Cox (P/HO) with John P. Walsh (S/S) in October 1968.

On May 29, representatives of the Bureau of European Affairs in the Working Group completed a military contingency paper dealing with available forces in the Middle East, descriptions of how military action could develop, possible Arab economic reprisals which could follow the outbreak of hostilities, Soviet capabilities and possible actions, outcomes and post-war bargaining positions, and a detailed checklist of actions for the United States to take in the first 48 hours of actual conflict. The projection yielded several conclusions. First, it was believed that it would be difficult to prevent any hostilities in the Tiran area from leading to a major war; second, it was thought that the Israelis were likely to achieve air superiority and destroy Egyptian forces in the Sinai within ten days to two weeks, but at a major cost in men and matériel; and third, it seemed either very difficult, even impossible, to stop the fighting before Israel had seized a sufficiently great portion of Egyptian territory to command the post-war bargaining, at least respecting Aqaba, and probably on other points of conflict. The paper was submitted with the comment that, fortunately, it appeared as if the contingencies with which it was intended to deal would not arise. The covering memorandum noted, however, that there was still the possibility of trouble arising out of efforts to maintain the right of innocent passage through the Gulf of Aqaba, and the contributors to the paper had therefore decided that study would be continued on possible Arab moves to interdict the Suez Canal and certain oil pipe lines.¹

The probable economic consequences of efforts to open the Gulf of Aqaba by force were considered in a memorandum prepared for the Middle East Task Force by its Working Group on Economic Vulnerabilities. This paper was sent to the White House on May 31. The Vulnerabilities Group found that the United States had little economic leverage on the Arab countries and almost none on Egypt, since the food needs of Egypt and other Arab countries were less in 1967 than normally and the Russians could supply them through the summer without difficulty. U.S. exports to the Arab countries were largely standard items easily available elsewhere. Denial of U.S. goods would hurt the Arabs only in the implausible event of a worldwide embargo.

¹Memorandum from EUR/RPE (Hinton) to EUR (Leddy), May 29, 1967, secret.

The Arab countries together would have powerful economic weapons to use against the Atlantic nations, the study continued. Egypt and Syria alone could not inflict serious damage. The costs, however, would become very high when oil-producing states such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, and the Gulf Shaikhdoms found it necessary to move against Anglo-American oil interests. At worst, denial of petroleum exports and expropriation of U.S. holdings would mean losses of up to \$500 million in net U.S. foreign exchange earnings from oil holdings per year, the loss of net non-oil trade earnings of up to an additional \$500 million, the loss of billions of dollars in U.S. capital assets, a loss to the United Kingdom of up to \$1 billion in foreign exchange earnings, and a crisis in sterling and in the international monetary system.

An analysis of the situation yielded the additional conclusion that oil-producing nations would take some action against the United States, ranging from scattered sabotage to sequestration of oil holdings and selective prohibition of exports. If the United States wished to minimize the costs involved, it would have to hold the Europeans to a common front by presenting a credible prospect that they could face Nasser down quickly enough to avoid a major disruption in oil supplies. Most European countries had oil stocks to last for 50 days. The United States would also have to make it clear to the Europeans and Japanese that it stood ready to bear a proper share of the physical and monetary costs of disruption in oil flows, including eventual rationing; and the United States would have to give producing countries the best possible excuse for moderation by presenting a plausible image of even-handedness towards both the Arabs and the Israelis, as well as to convince these countries there was a reasonable prospect of Nasser's failure. Such assurances to the Europeans and Japanese would be absolutely necessary in order to prevent them from making side deals with the producers, including the takeover of U.S. and U.K. operations. Even if the Arabs did their worst, it was the feeling of the Vulnerabilities Group that necessary levels of aviation and other fuels could be supplied to Vietnam from domestic sources even though the fuels at that moment were supplied almost entirely from Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. Such levels could be maintained by protection controls and product allocation procedures in the United States.¹

¹Memorandum from Chairman of the Middle East Task Force (Battle) to the Control Group, May 31, 1967, secret.

The legal aspects of Egypt's action in closing the Gulf of Aqaba were considered in a paper, completed by the Legal Adviser's office on May 29, entitled "Legal Status of the Strait of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba". The authors of the study concluded, first, that there was a right of free and innocent passage through the Gulf of Aqaba and Strait of Tiran for the merchant shipping of all nations; second, that the U.A.R. did not enjoy belligerent status or rights entitling it to close the Strait or Gulf; third, that innocence of passage should be determined objectively according to the conduct of a transiting vessel, not by the character of its cargo; and, fourth, that the U.A.R. was not entitled to suspend or obstruct such passage, whether by laying mine fields or by other action of its armed forces. In addition, the study pointed out that, if the U.A.R. failed to remove any mines actually laid, Israel and maritime nations whose shipping used the Strait would be entitled to take action by way of self-help to clear any mines from the Strait after reasonable efforts had been made to secure international action from the U.N. Security Council.

The memorandum cast doubt upon reliance on the use of the word "aggression" to characterize the closure of the Strait of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba, for the United Nations Charter required the Security Council to determine the existence of any act of aggression, and it was not likely that the Council would make any such finding against the U.A.R. Beyond the remedy of self-help, the study continued, there was grave doubt that international law would give Israel any right to initiate the use of armed force against the U.A.R. in the absence of an armed attack by the U.A.R. on Israel. Closure of the Gulf and Strait and mining of the Strait did not of themselves constitute an armed attack, although it was not clear whether the actual explosion of a mine against a transiting merchant vessel would be considered an armed attack against the flag country. If, however, as part of the U.A.R. action to close the Strait and Gulf, Egyptian armed forces fired upon a vessel transiting lawfully, a vessel lawfully engaged in mine-sweeping, or an escort vessel present to give protection to such a merchant vessel or mine-sweeper, the act of firing would constitute an armed attack on the flag state of the vessel fired upon. The affected state and others joining with it in collective self-defense would be entitled to take such military measures as were necessary to repel the attack and as were proportionate to it. In the context of obstruction of the Strait

of Tiran and Gulf of Aqaba, self-defense would include military action against U.A.R. shore batteries, naval craft, and any other forces used to deny the right of passage; and it could include occupation of Sharm-el-Sheikh if such action proved necessary to assure passage through the Strait. Self-defense, however, in the opinion of the Legal Adviser, did not cover general hostilities against the U.A.R.¹

On May 29, the Egyptian Ambassador to the United Nations had delivered a speech in the Security Council in which he set forth a series of legal arguments in support of the U.A.R. position concerning the Strait of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba. The Legal Adviser assessed these arguments in a memorandum to the Secretary dated May 30. The U.A.R. had contended that Israeli forces had occupied the town of Elath and surrounding area at the head of the Gulf after the conclusion of the Egyptian-Israeli Armistice Agreement of February 24, 1949, and that Israel's possession of Elath was illegal since it was a violation of that agreement. According to Egyptian Ambassador el-Kony, Israeli possession of Elath did not give Israel any rights in the Gulf of Aqaba and the Strait of Tiran.

The Legal Adviser maintained that Elath and the Negev had never been Egyptian territory, but had formed a part of Palestine under the British mandate. Armistice questions affecting this sector had not been disposed of by the Egyptian-Israeli Armistice Agreement of February 24, 1949, but had been left to the subsequent Israeli-Jordanian Armistice Agreement made on April 3, 1949. Israeli occupation of Elath occurred during March 1949. The Armistice Agreement with Jordan showed clearly that the coastal area comprising Elath and the territory north of it were in the Israeli zone, and the lines drawn by this Armistice Agreement had been observed for 18 years.

El-Kony had analogized the status of the Gulf of Aqaba to that of the Gulf of Fonseca, a bay surrounded by the territory of Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. The Central American Court of Justice had decided in 1917 that the Gulf of Fonseca was a "historic bay" of the three littoral countries and constituted internal waters of the three which they were entitled

¹Memorandum from L (Meeker) to S (The Secretary), May 29, 1967, confidential.

to regulate. The Court had decided that Nicaragua was not entitled unilaterally to grant base rights to the United States on Nicaraguan territory bordering on the Gulf. The Legal Adviser concluded that the U.A.R. could not rely upon this case since the Gulf of Aqaba was not a "historic bay" in the sense the term had been applied to the Gulf of Fonseca, and also that Israel, as a littoral state bordering on the Gulf, had rights of sovereignty in its own territorial sea and could claim rights of passage through the Gulf and Strait in any circumstances.

The Legal Adviser also concluded that the U.S. defensive quarantine during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 offered no analogy to the Middle East situation, for it lent no support at all to the U.A.R. attempt to close the Strait of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba. United States action against Cuba had not been founded on any assertion of sovereignty in waters claimed as territorial sea, but had been based on a resolution of the O.A.S., of which Cuba was a member. The Legal Adviser regarded such action as recognized and justified under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter.

El-Kony had sought in his speech to show that the United States had acquiesced as early as 1950 in Egypt's claims regarding the Strait and the Gulf, and he had quoted from an exchange of diplomatic correspondence passages intended to support his view. The Legal Adviser pointed out that the Egyptian reply of January 28, 1950, to an inquiry by the United States said that Egypt's occupation of the islands of Tiran and Sanafir had "in no way [been] conceived in a spirit of obstructing in any way innocent passage through the stretch of water separating these two islands from the Egyptian coast of Sinai."¹

Israeli Eagerness to Test Passage Through
the Strait of Tiran and Impatience With
U.S. Proposed Moves in the U.N. Security
Council

Prime Minister Eshkol told President Johnson, in a letter of May 30, that the President's letter of May 28 to him, as well as his assurances to Foreign Minister Eban, had had important influence

¹Information memorandum from L (Meeker) to S (The Secretary), May 30, 1967, unclassified.

upon the Israelis' decision to await developments for a further limited period before taking steps on their own. In the light of Nasser's aggressive intent, Eshkol continued, Israel was rapidly approaching a point at which counsels of restraint would lack any moral or logical basis, and, therefore, a continuation of watchful waiting for any considerable time was out of the question.

Eshkol made the point that an international naval escort should move through the Straits within a week or two of his letter. The Israeli Prime Minister asserted that Secretary-General U Thant should insist that Nasser's blockade and troop concentrations be cancelled, and he also called for immediate coordination between U.S. forces in the Middle East and Israeli Defense Forces in order to examine how the United States could help to prevent or halt aggression. If the situation was to continue, Eshkol said, there would be further erosion of the Western position in the Middle East. Claiming that his nation was passing through "some of the heaviest days in its history", Eshkol appealed to President Johnson to give an effective response.¹

On much the same issue, in an interview in Washington held at Ambassador Harman's request, Under Secretary Rostow asked Harman if he had any new information on Israeli ship movements in the Gulf of Aqaba. Rostow told Harman that, pending a Presidential decision, the United States was not in a position to advise Israel how movements of ships should be controlled. He expressed the hope that, if Israeli-owned ships tested passage through the Strait of Tiran and were turned back or seized, Israel would protest but not attack. Harman replied that Israel would not send a ship to test the Strait if, in the event of failure, the next move were to be only to protest. Israel could not adopt such a strategy in the absence of any certainty about the U.S. plan.

Queried about Soviet intentions, Rostow noted that the U.S.S.R. had told the United States Government that it had advised restraint on the U.A.R. but had also said that, if there was war, Russia would provide assistance to the Arabs. Though they had not indicated they would commit themselves militarily, the Russians had expressed a

¹To Tel Aviv, tel. 205045, May 31, 1967, secret/nodis.

desire to see Nasser obtain a political victory, in a reversal of the 1956 situation, without having a war. Rostow answered Harman's question about the position of Saudi Arabia and Jordan by saying that the United States was in the process of communicating to those states, reminding them that U.S. policy in the Middle East had been "even-handed and applied on their behalf", and stressing that it was not in their interests to become involved in the current crisis. Rostow reminded Harman, however, that, if there was a war in the Middle East, it was quite likely that Saudi Arabia and Jordan would be swept up into it on the side of the U.A.R.

Referring to the U.N. Secretary-General's report calling for a moratorium, Under Secretary Rostow told Harman that the United States was planning to offer a resolution in support of U Thant's appeal. Harman tended to discourage this effort unless the United States could get nine votes in the Security Council. Rostow replied that the Secretary's view was that it was worth a try, since the United States might have nine votes plus public opinion outside the Security Council. Citing the Corfu Channel case, Rostow observed that a move into the Security Council at this point would improve the legal position of the United States. Harman stressed that the best tactic as it appeared to him was to concentrate on the three points made on May 23 by Prime Minister Eshkol dealing with troop concentrations, infiltration, and the Gulf. Though Nasser had said that settlement should be based on a return to the status quo ante as of 1956, Israel was placing the burden of proof on him to justify Egypt's having moved from the status quo ante of May 22. Harman felt that the United States should support what the Secretary-General had said rather than attempt to obtain reaffirmation of U Thant's position through the Security Council. He reiterated the view that, if the United States could not get nine votes, there should be no further movement in the direction of obtaining Security Council approval of the U.S. resolution. Harman added that the United States should stand on the Secretary-General's report, and let Nasser line up votes in support of Egypt's exercising belligerent rights in the Strait of Tiran.¹

¹To Tel Aviv and Cairo, tel. 204946, May 30, 1967, secret/exdis.

Jordan's Defense Pact With Egypt
and Efforts To Obtain a Public
Statement of U.S. Neutrality in
the Arab-Israeli Dispute

In what was termed by Embassy Amman a "sudden and unexpected move", King Hussein of Jordan flew his own plane to Cairo on May 30 to meet with Nasser and sign a five-year joint defense agreement. Embassy Amman monitored a radio broadcast describing the signing of the pact and gave the salient points to the Department. Among other provisions, the pact stipulated that any armed aggression against Egypt or Jordan would be considered as aggression against both, and that each would assist the other with the use of armed force if necessary. Although a joint defense council and joint chiefs of staff were to be established, Hussein agreed that, in the event military operations began, command of both armies would be under the U.A.R. Each party was to pay the expenses of military operations on its territory, and the agreement was to last for five years with a provision for a five-year renewal.

The Department doubted that the pact would have any significant effect on Arab military capabilities, but it was viewed as enhancing the Arab posture of solidarity in the face of "common danger". In further demonstration of Arab unity, Hussein returned to Amman in the company of his "arch-enemy" Ahmad Shukairi, head of the Palestine Liberation Organization. It was the Department's preliminary judgment, therefore, that King Hussein's visit to Cairo would help shore up the domestic position of his regime.

This preliminary evaluation was strengthened and confirmed by later reports of Ambassador Burns, who stated that Hussein apparently had succeeded in obtaining additional insurance for Jordan and his regime. Having deemed U.S. assurances insufficient, Hussein had decided the defensive pact with Cairo was necessary to insure military assistance for the incumbent regime in Jordan. Burns concluded that Nasser, seemingly delighted to get the pact with Jordan, might further exploit his strengthened position.

On May 31, Ambassador Burns met with King Hussein, who explained to Burns that Nasser believed an Israeli attack on Syria was imminent and felt that he had had to react. Hussein told Burns that the U.A.R. would neither back down on the issue

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of passage through the Strait of Tiran nor attack, but that Egypt was ready for war if it came. Nasser was convinced that, if Israel attacked, it would mean that the United States had given Israel "the green light". Ambassador Burns told Hussein that the Jordanian King had to disabuse Nasser of this notion because, if Israel thought its survival was at stake, no U.S. pressure could stop the Israelis. Burns insisted that the United States was trying to prevent war, not to help Israel.

Hussein said that Nasser's suspicions of U.S. motives had been intensified because of an apparent U.S. embargo on arms to the Arabs. He asked Burns why the S.S. Green Island, a vessel laden with ammunition for the Arabs, had been diverted from its course toward the Strait of Tiran. Burns read to Hussein a telegram from the Department which stated that the owners of the ship diverted the vessel because of their concern that the Strait was mined. Hussein appeared satisfied with this reply, but then rejoined that Nasser felt Wheelus Air Force Base in Libya was being used to ferry U.S. military equipment to Israel. Burns said he knew of no such action.

Hussein concluded by saying that Nasser and all Arabs hoped the United States Government, in the event of hostilities, would not take any action which would be considered aggression against the Arabs. If the United States committed aggression, the Jordanian King said, Nasser would ask for Soviet assistance, and Hussein added that he thought Nasser was talking at that moment to the Russians. The King proposed that President Johnson issue a public statement clarifying U.S. policy and emphasizing American neutrality in this dispute. Hussein felt that a statement from the President would assist efforts toward peace.

During the conversation, Hussein asked Burns if the U.S. Air Force detachment at Mafrq would be withdrawn. Ambassador Burns later reported to the Department that Hussein would not be unhappy to dismantle the operation. The real problem was what to do with five F-104 aircraft based at Mafrq in order to minimize the political consequences to the United States. Only a few top Jordanian officials knew the planes, bearing Royal Jordanian Air Force markings, were really U.S. Government property. Burns suggested either taking the planes out and having the Jordanians explain that the planes had been loaned for training purposes only, or leaving the planes in Jordan and selling them

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immediately to the Government at a reduced price, taking into account in either event that F-104's then on order for delivery to Jordan would be more up-to-date equipment.¹

Continuing Israeli Concern Over U.S. Policy
in the Middle East Crisis

In a further effort to reassure the Israelis, on the afternoon of May 31 Under Secretary Rostow showed Israeli Ambassador Harman the draft of a maritime declaration prepared by the Department. The draft read as follows:

The Governments of maritime nations subscribing to this Declaration express their grave concern at recent developments in the Middle East which are currently under consideration in the United Nations Security Council. Our countries, as Members of the United Nations committed to the Purposes and Principles set forth in the Charter, are convinced that scrupulous respect for the principles of international law regarding freedom of navigation on international waterways is indispensable.

In regard to shipping through the waterways that serve ports on the Gulf of Aqaba, our Governments reaffirm the view that the Gulf is an international waterway into and through which the vessels of all nations have a right of passage. Our Governments will assert this right on behalf of all shipping sailing under their flags, and our Governments are prepared to cooperate among themselves and to join with others in seeking general recognition of this right.

¹To Amman, tel. 204891, May 30, 1967, secret; to all American diplomatic posts, tel. 204944, May 30, 1967, secret; from Amman, tel. 3905, May 30, 1967, limited official use; from Amman, tel. 3929, May 31, 1967, secret; from Amman, tel. 3931, May 31, 1967, confidential; from Amman, tel. 3932, May 31, 1967, secret/exdis; from Amman, tel. 3933, May 31, 1967, secret/limdis.

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The views we express in this Declaration formed the basis on which a settlement of the Near East conflict was achieved in early 1957 -- a settlement that has governed the actions of nations for more than ten years.

These views will guide our policies and action in seeking to assure peace and security in the Near East.

As Rostow explained, the purpose of the declaration was to assert the view of subscribing governments that the Gulf of Aqaba was an international waterway through which all nations had a right of passage. Rostow pointed out that, in addition to declaring "grave concern" over Middle Eastern developments, the draft document expressed the hope that settlement of the crisis "may be found within the United Nations." Ambassador Harman said he did not like inclusion of a reference to the United Nations because the whole problem could be stalled in the Security Council indefinitely. Rostow reminded the Ambassador of the original purpose of the United States in first seeking to resolve the crisis through the United Nations. Harman then asked why there was no reference to the 1958 Convention on the Law of the Sea. Rostow replied that the United States had considered including a specific reference to the Convention, but had decided not to put it in since many states had not signed the 1958 document. Rostow added that he thought the last paragraph of the declaration, which put the issue in the context of 1957, was more important. Harman inquired into the French position on the declaration, commenting that signing the document was one thing, but that he doubted the French would participate in the naval exercise contemplated in connection with the declaration.

Ambassador Harman then desired the Under Secretary to reveal what the next step of the United States would be, and he asked specifically how long the United States would drag out the action in the Security Council. Rostow replied that Ambassador Goldberg was pressing hard for the disposition of his motion to have the Security Council approve U Thant's appeal for a moratorium. In his opinion, Rostow asserted, Nasser would be inclined to hold on to what he had and not to take any more risks, and would concentrate on the moderate Arab states rather than Israel if he could retain possession of Sharm-el-Sheikh. Rostow explained that the issue of how to test Egypt's announced blockade of the Strait of Tiran was crucial in getting back to the status quo ante.

Harman wanted to know what kind of test would be used to force the Strait, and when it would be made. Rostow replied that the United States was discussing the possibility of sending either an unescorted or an escorted ship through the Strait. He indicated that the question of force was a difficult one, since the manner in which force was first used could determine many aspects of the outcome. Rostow said that the United States was studying the problem of force most carefully, and that the doctrine of "measured response" applied in all U.S. planning. He reiterated to the Israeli Ambassador that U.S. policy was to have the international community take on the question of the Gulf of Aqaba and thus separate it from the Arab-Israeli conflict. Rostow stated that the United States would join the British Government in proposing the Maritime Declaration on June 1, and was moving ahead on Congressional consultations.

After a brief discussion of the situation in Jordan, Harman continued with a presentation of the problems his Government was facing with respect to the entire Arab world. While Harman conceded it was rational to believe that Nasser might not attack Israel, he pointed to the wave of irrational passion sweeping the Arab peoples. Harman said that, from the Israeli view, the military situation was worsening every day. He said that his Government was not reassured by the United States' view of the situation, and that no one could be sure what Nasser would do. Rostow then reminded the Ambassador that the United States Government had assured Abba Eban three times that if Israel did not act alone it would not be alone. The real question, Rostow said, was what Nasser was doing. There was no sign that he was bent on enforcing his announced blockade. Harman replied that there was a simple explanation for the lack of enforcement in the fact that no ships had come through the Gulf to Eilat since May 23. Rostow asked Harman to check his statement, since U.S. information was that at least two ships had passed through the Gulf bound for Eilat only shortly before.

Ambassador Harman proceeded to raise the question of liaison between the United States Government and the Israeli military. If Nasser decided to strike, he pointed out, Israel was only five or six minutes' flying time from Egypt. Harman reminded the Under Secretary that, while the United States was still talking about an ad referendum scenario, Israel could be attacked at any moment and that, with this buildup continuing

every day, the Israelis were becoming increasingly nervous. Harman asserted that his Government had clear indications that Nasser had been disappointed when Israel did not strike first. He complained that, in the event of an Egyptian attack, as far as military contacts with the United States were concerned, the Israelis would have no telephone number to call, no code for plane recognition, and no way to get in touch with the U.S. Sixth Fleet.

In addition to requesting once again a military liaison arrangement with the United States, Ambassador Harman concluded his presentation by making three immediate requests. He asked for one Hawk battery and 100 missiles, 140 M60 tanks, and 24 A-4E Skyhawks, including ground equipment, armaments, and operating parts for 5,000 flying hours. The Government of Israel also needed ten chief petty officers to assist in establishing a crash program to train ten flyers to use the Skyhawks. Under Secretary Rostow said he would inform the Department of Defense immediately, and told Harman that the requests would, in addition, be presented to the Department of Defense in the normal way.¹

¹To Tel Aviv, tel. 206657, June 1, 1967, secret/nodis.

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U.S. Efforts To Ascertain Common
Ground With Egypt

On the afternoon of May 30, former Secretary of the Treasury Robert B. Anderson proceeded to Cairo as personal representative of President Johnson for a meeting with President Nasser. As outlined by the Department of State, Anderson's mission was to listen and to feel out the position of the U.A.R. but not to act as a "mediator". Assistant Secretary Battle expressed the hope that Anderson would not miss an opportunity to make certain appropriate points with Egypt's President if the situation presented itself. Battle felt that, depending on the nature of Anderson's meeting with Nasser, Anderson might make the points that President Johnson wanted to find a groundwork for friendship between the United States and the U.A.R., and that it was Anderson's conclusion, on the basis of lengthy friendship with President Johnson, that the President in his letter of May 22 had measured his words carefully and had meant what he said. Since Anderson was expected to see the President immediately upon his return to the United States on June 1, he was to indicate that he would be available to bear any messages Nasser wished to transmit to Mr. Johnson. Anderson was also to attempt to make Nasser understand that the United States was determined to face its responsibilities but hoped that a collision course between the two countries could be avoided.

The meeting between Anderson and Nasser took place as scheduled, and Anderson left for the United States on June 1. Following Anderson's return, Embassy Cairo cabled the text of a letter to President Johnson from Nasser, presumably in reply to Johnson's letter of May 22 to Nasser. Nasser asserted that his Government's position had been taken strictly to prevent further encroachment of Israeli troops into the demilitarized zone as established under the General Armistice Agreements. Nasser deplored what he termed Israeli aggression, and stated that the U.A.R. would defend itself against any aggression "with all our means and potentialities" while, at the same time, the Arabs would continue to allow innocent passage "in our territorial waters". Emphasizing that the crossing of demarcation lines by some Arab individuals who had failed to secure their return to their homeland was a matter entirely outside the power of the U.A.R. to control, Nasser affirmed

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the belief of the U.A.R. that the expatriate Palestinian Arabs had a right to return to their homeland. At the conclusion of his lengthy message, Nasser told President Johnson that he would welcome listening to Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey at any time the Vice President chose to visit the U.A.R. Nasser promised to give Humphrey a picture of the Middle East situation as the Arabs viewed it and said that he was ready to send U.A.R. Vice President Zakareya Mohieddin to Washington immediately to meet with President Johnson and to expound the Arab position.

The Department informed Ambassador Nolte that President Johnson welcomed the idea of a visit from Mohieddin at his earliest convenience and expressed the wish that, in view of the urgency of the situation, the visit might be arranged without delay. After hearing no reply for 24 hours regarding the proposed visits, the Department instructed Ambassador Nolte to advise President Nasser that former Secretary Anderson was waiting in New York for Nasser's answer and would proceed immediately to arrange the visits agreed upon. The Department told Nolte that the great value of Mohieddin's visit was the opportunity for private discussions, and the less said about it the better.¹

In a move parallel to the Nasser-Anderson talk, retired Ambassador Charles W. Yost made a private call on U.A.R. Foreign Minister Riad on the evening of June 1. Although Riad had been a colleague of Yost in Syria and at the United Nations, he reportedly spoke to Yost with intense and uncharacteristic emotion and bitterness during a presentation of one and one-half hours. The first hour of their discussion was devoted largely to Arab complaints against the United States and Israel. Riad stated that he had given up hope the United States would ever deal impartially with Arab-Israeli issues, and that he had concluded political pressures inside the United States would always make it impossible for the U.S. Government to support

¹To Beirut and Cairo, tel. 204116, May 29, 1967, secret/nodis; to Cairo, tel. 205476, May 31, 1967, secret/nodis; from Cairo, tel. 8397, June 2, 1967, secret/nodis; to Cairo, tel. 207861, June 3, 1967, secret/nodis; to Cairo, tel. 207994, June 4, 1967, secret/nodis.

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measures opposed by Israel in or out of the United Nations. Riad contrasted the Israeli refusals to observe armistice agreements and the repeated Israeli violations of U.N. resolutions with his own and other Arab efforts to revive the Mixed Armistice Commission and the intent of the U.A.R. draft resolution which had just then been submitted to the United Nations Security Council.¹ He went on to say that, while Egypt had no quarrel with Israel, the heart of the Arab-Israel issue was the fate of more than one million refugees. The Arabs were extraordinarily well united in the crisis, he continued, and they would not be shaken by threats. Riad added that the U.A.R. Government was under considerable pressure from army officers to take more vigorous action. The U.A.R. was resisting this pressure, he explained, but it was also mobilizing public opinion in preparation for a probable attack by Israel or others. Perhaps the only way out of the impasse, he declared at one point, might be a short war and then an appeal to the U.N. Security Council, followed by a U.N. call for a cease-fire with which the U.A.R. would comply. Thereafter, a more reasonable settlement might be possible.

Ambassador Yost explained U.S. apprehension about the consequences of a war and mentioned successful efforts to persuade the Israelis to hold off. Yost cited, however, Israeli fears of Arab mobilization against them, Nasser's references to the return to the 1948 status quo, and the Israeli conviction of a vital interest in free passage through the Strait of Tiran, as well as the U.S. policy on this subject. Riad's reply was made in strongest terms as he reiterated several times the U.A.R. determination not to alter its decision to close the Strait to Israeli ships and strategic materials, including oil. Twenty days before, the U.A.R. had expected that 1967 would be a quiet, normal summer. The threatened attack on Syria had taken the U.A.R. by surprise, and Egypt had had to ask for UNEF withdrawal. Riad continued by saying that the reoccupation of Sharm-el-Sheikh had made a return to the status quo of 1956 and a closure of the Strait inevitable. He asserted that the U.A.R. certainly had a sovereign right to maintain a state of war against Israel and hence to exercise

¹A summary of the proposal of the United Arab Republic--which was presented orally--is contained in the U.N. Monthly Chronicle, vol. IV, no. 6 (June 1967), p.6.

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belligerent rights in its territorial waters. The Egyptian Foreign Minister said he would see no objection to Israel's presenting a complaint on this issue to the International Court of Justice, but he added that the Arabs had taken a firm public position on the closure of the Strait and could not relinquish it without destroying Nasser's place in the Arab world. The U.A.R. would have no alternative but to fight "anyone" who endeavored to force the passage of the Strait; however, if oil was kept out of the Strait, there would be no problem. Riad noted U.A.R. efforts to persuade Iran to prevent oil shipments over the proscribed route, referred to President Tubman's "wise" decision to divert Liberian tankers from the Gulf of Aqaba, and added that, if the United States really wished to be helpful, it might urge American oil companies to refrain from making shipments through the affected area. Israel could be otherwise supplied, and the problem was thus not economic but purely psychological.

Yost said he had heard considerable apprehension expressed that the U.A.R. not only insisted on closing the Strait but also would proceed to other demands quite unacceptable to Israel. Riad replied that, while the refugee problem was the underlying cause of difficulties, the U.A.R. had no other demands. Riad stated his firm belief that it would be in the general interest for the Mixed Armistice Commission to be reconstituted, and for U.N. Truce Supervisory observers to be reactivated along the U.A.R.-Israel frontier. Otherwise, he said, incidents were sure to occur. The Egyptian Foreign Minister cited the Israeli seizure of a five-man U.A.R. patrol a few days before. The fact that the patrol had not been released meant that U.A.R. forces would have to seize a corresponding Israeli patrol. Riad felt quite certain that Israel would not accede to a revival of the Mixed Armistice Commission. He also warned that the U.A.R. could not tolerate further substantial aggressive Israeli actions on Syrian or Jordanian frontiers such as the shooting down of Syrian planes over Syria and Jordan.

Riad said finally that he was still confused as to U.S. policy and intentions and wished clarification. Yost reiterated U.S. views on the basis of high-level statements but told Riad that, in his report to Washington, he would indicate that the U.A.R. Foreign Minister continued to be uncertain as to U.S.

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policy. Yost then expressed the hope that there might be an early opportunity for Ambassador Nolte to present his credentials, since for the past few days Nolte had been acting in his official capacity as Ambassador but had not been formally accredited by the Egyptian Government. Riad agreed that close contact would be maintained between the two Governments but stated that there were six other Ambassadors waiting to present their credentials, that President Nasser was extremely busy, and that there could be no assurance of an early opportunity. Riad did ask Yost to inform Nolte that the new Ambassador should carry on business exactly as though he had presented his credentials, and should feel free to call on the Foreign Minister at any time and to see anyone else with whom he wished to do business. Riad also suggested that he and Yost should meet again before the latter's departure.

In reporting back to the Department his conversation with Riad, Ambassador Yost concluded that the U.A.R. could not and would not relax its position on the closure of the Strait of Tiran and that there was no prospect for the success of the tactic of mobilizing maritime powers to reopen it short of the use of overwhelming military force, an act which would be damaging to the U.S. position in the Arab world. Yost suggested to the Department that he should return to the United States, since Nolte had easy access to Riad and could carry on from that point. The Department authorized Yost to return to Washington while commenting that very grave issues lay between the Governments of the United Arab Republic and the United States. While Riad's remarks to Yost had assured the Department to some extent that he earnestly desired to prevent further deterioration of relations, Departmental officials believed that he gave them very little room in which to work, since the issues at stake involved long-held major U.S. policies. The Department, Yost was told, planned to ascertain what few common interests remained between the United States and the United Arab Republic in order to find ways of enlarging on them.¹

¹From Cairo, tel. 8349, June 2, 1967, secret/exdis; from Cairo, tel. 8362, June 2, 1967, secret/exdis; to Cairo, tel. 207517, June 2, 1967, secret/exdis.

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U.S. Efforts To Promote the Proposed Maritime Declaration

By May 30, 1967, the United Kingdom had made soundings on the proposed Maritime Declaration with Italy, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Greece, Panama, Liberia, and Japan. The United States had done so with France, Belgium, Canada, the Netherlands, India, Italy, and Norway. The total number of nations to be approached by Britain and the United States was 31, split between them so that the United States was to contact 18 maritime capitals and the United Kingdom, thirteen. The Department made up a check list in tabular form of each capital in alphabetical order, and under headings of "incoming cable", "comment", and "Departmental approaches", the appropriate entries were made consisting of telegram numbers and remarks so that the status of the Maritime Declaration could be determined at a moment's notice.¹

On May 31, the Department instructed Embassies in maritime capitals to solicit support for the draft Declaration after coordinating their efforts with those of the British. Departmental officials also indicated that Israeli Ambassadors in the various posts would strongly support efforts made by the United States and Britain. In a conversation held on June 1, however, between Christopher Everett, First Secretary of the British Embassy, and Deane R. Hinton of the Maritime Declaration Sub-Committee, Everett stated that the British Foreign Office was strongly opposed to associating Israel and the Israeli Ambassadors with diplomatic efforts to obtain adherence to the draft Maritime Declaration. The Foreign Office thought that Israeli efforts in conjunction with U.S. and U.K. approaches would change the character of the matter from one of principle to one of partisanship. Hinton told Everett that senior American officials had asked the Israelis to give the United States and Britain their support, and that U.S. instructions to the field had reflected this fact. Everett then said that as far as Israeli adherence to the Declaration was concerned, it was

¹Chart listing maritime capitals and Departmental approaches, prepared by the Maritime Declaration Sub-Committee [May 30, 1967], no classification; memorandum for the President, S/S no. 9320, drafted by Deane R. Hinton (EUR/RPE), May 30, 1967, secret/exdis.

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London's view that later on, after others had signed up, Israeli adherence would be "all right".

Other problems developed between Britain and the United States regarding the matter of presenting the draft declaration to the various countries being approached. Embassy London informed the Department that British Cabinet officials had insisted on having other nations join the United States and the United Kingdom in canvassing support for the Maritime Declaration. As an illustration of this attitude, Embassy London said that Britain did not want to make the first approach to the Scandinavians but preferred that the Dutch do it.

A further point of friction between the two countries resulted from the fact that a Departmental spokesman at a press briefing on June 1 referred to United States support of the "British initiative as announced by Foreign Minister Brown yesterday", even though U.S. posts were being instructed to avoid public mention of the existence of a draft declaration and to say only that the United States and the United Kingdom were consulting other maritime powers on the principles involved in the Gulf of Aqaba situation. Embassy London reported on June 2 that the British Foreign Office had expressed "acute unhappiness" over the Department's public reference to "British initiative". British officials also complained about an apparent lack of instructions to U.S. Ambassadors to secure the broadest support for contingency planning.

In reply to these criticisms, the Department expressed its concern to the United Kingdom that many British Ambassadors were without instructions to act in concert with their U.S. colleagues. The Department agreed that it was preferable for the Dutch to approach the Scandinavians, but stated that the overriding consideration was that the United States and the United Kingdom should make their advances promptly. Assistant Secretary Battle recommended, and the Secretary concurred, that agreement should be reached by the United States and the

¹To all American diplomatic posts, cirtels. 205690 and 205691, May 31, 1967, secret/limdis; memcon. Everett (U.K.) and Hinton (U.S.), June 1, 1967, secret.

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United Kingdom to eliminate conflicts between their instructions to their respective Ambassadors regarding the question of mobilizing support for the draft Maritime Declaration.¹

In order to prevent press leaks and speculation about the draft, the Department instructed all posts to limit their comments to the press. Officials might say only that they were consulting with the government to which they were accredited on the subject of the Middle East situation and such general principles as might facilitate settlement. A Departmental spokesman then informed the press that the United States-drafted Maritime Declaration was the subject of discussion among a number of governments.²

By the evening of June 2, five countries had made known their position on the Maritime Declaration. Australia, Iceland, and the Netherlands stated their willingness to adhere, and the Dutch Cabinet agreed to support the United States and the United Kingdom in securing the adherence of other capitals. Argentina informed the United States that it did not consider itself a maritime power and therefore would not participate in the Declaration, while France indicated that its proposal for a Four-Power meeting was the best alternative and that it did not believe that the Maritime Declaration would help the situation.³

U.S. Efforts To Improve Coordination of
American and British Policies in the Middle
East

Meanwhile, in order to improve the coordination of various additional facets of American and British policies in the Middle East crisis, Under Secretary Rostow asked British Ambassador

¹From London, tel. 10027, June 1, 1967, secret/limdis; to all American diplomatic posts, tel. 206639, June 1, secret; from London, tel. 10100, June 2, 1967, secret/limdis; to London, tel. 207009, June 2, 1967, secret/limdis; memorandum from Assistant Secretary Battle to Secretary Rusk, S/S No. 9522, June 2, 1967, secret.

²To all American diplomatic posts, cirtels. 206839 and 207786, June 2, 1967, limited official use.

³From Canberra, tel. 5850, June 2, 1967, secret/limdis; to The Hague, tel. 207978, June 3, 1967, secret/exdis.

Sir Patrick Dean, on June 1, that the United Kingdom send a team of senior-level officials to Washington for policy discussions on the Middle East. He also requested experts for joint consultations on oil, trade, and financial questions, including possible means of handling funds deposited in the United States and the United Kingdom on Middle East countries. After naming certain individuals with whom he was acquainted, Rostow said that it might also be useful to have a Bank of England representative. Hoping that the team could be in Washington on Tuesday, June 6, the Department requested Embassy London to follow up Under Secretary Rostow's request with the British Government, and requested that the proposed consultations not become public knowledge or attract any press attention at that time.¹

After a one and one-half hour discussion held at the White House on June 2 between representatives of the United States and British Governments, it was agreed that there would be maintained a small group on overall matters on the U.S. side to keep in touch with a similar group on the U.K. side, and it was also decided that there should be no joint military contingency planning at that time. In addition, it was understood that monetary and financial discussions were to be developed between the United States and United Kingdom through established official channels, including the two Treasuries, the Bank of England, and the New York Federal Reserve Bank. At that stage, there were to be no approaches to the private sector of the banking community because of the dangers of speculation.²

Further U.S. Attempts To Reassure and
Restrain Israel

On June 2, before departing for consultation in Israel, Ambassador Harman asked to see Secretary Rusk to learn what he could tell the Government of Israel concerning U.S. assurances of support. Rusk informed Harman that, at that moment, nothing

¹To London, tel. 206818, June 2, 1967, confidential/exdis.

²Memorandum of Conversation, Secretary Rusk, et. al., Sir Burke Trend, et. al., S/S No. 10261, June 2, 1967, secret.

could be added to what the President had already communicated to Eshkol. The Secretary stated that the United States was attempting to get at least fourteen adherents to the Maritime Declaration, and he maintained that the key issue in the crisis was the question of a return to the status quo ante on the use of the Gulf. The Secretary also explained that the United States had not yet developed a multilateral context which would be acceptable to the U.S. Congress on the question of a naval force in the Red Sea.

Ambassador Harman asked if Israel had to tolerate ten thousand casualties before the United States conceded that aggression had occurred. Rusk replied that the question of who fired first would be significant, for the Russians would aid the Arabs if Egypt was attacked. He told Harman that Nasser was sending former Prime Minister and Vice President Zakariyah Mohieddin to Washington on the following weekend, and he said that the United States would inform Israel if Mohieddin said anything significant.

Harman then urged that the "farce" in the United Nations be ended. He said that Israel was prepared to test the Strait, and could not wait to react from a first strike by the Arabs. If its air power were lost, Harman maintained, Israel would have "had it". Secretary Rusk again cautioned Ambassador Harman regarding the consequences of an Israeli initiation of hostilities, and Harman, in reply, said that he expected to return to the United States by Sunday evening, June 4.¹

As a follow-up to the Rusk-Harman conversation, President Johnson wrote to Prime Minister Eshkol on June 3 that the position of the United States in the Middle East crisis rested on two principles. The first, enunciated by four Presidents, was that the United States supported the territorial integrity and political independence of all of the countries of the Middle East. The second was freedom of the seas. The President continued that, in conversation with Abba Eban on May 26, he had pointed out the need for the United States to act in concert with other nations; and he indicated to Eshkol that

¹To Tel Aviv, tel. 207977, June 3, 1967, secret/exdis; memcon, Secretary Rusk, Ambassador Harman, and others, June 2, 1967, top secret/nodis.

the United States was moving ahead to secure a declaration by the principal maritime powers asserting the right of passage through the Strait and Gulf. President Johnson added, "As a leading maritime nation, we have a vital interest in upholding freedom of the seas, and the right of passage through the straits of an international character." He concluded by telling Eshkol that the United States was advancing in its cooperative diplomatic efforts with Great Britain to secure the establishment of an international naval presence in the area of the Strait of Tiran, but doubted that a number of other maritime powers would be willing to join in such a demonstration unless and until United Nations processes had been exhausted. He reiterated his point made on May 26 to Eban that U.S. leadership was unanimous in refusing to move in isolation.

^ITo Tel Aviv, tel. 207955, June 3, 1967, secret/eyes only for Ambassador.

Secretary Rusk's Explanation of American
Policy to American Ambassadors in Arab
Countries

At the same time that it was attempting to restrain the Israelis, the United States also tried to make clear to the Arab States the limitations on what it could do in the Middle East crisis. In a circular telegram of June 3 to the American Ambassadors in Arab capitals, Secretary Rusk expressed his appreciation for their full, timely reporting of events and for their frank expressions of views in the Near East crisis. He told the Ambassadors that their considerations were being taken fully into account in a situation which the Secretary noted was "as complex and as dangerous as any we have faced". Rusk then said that the Ambassadors should not assume the United States could hold back Israel. He commented that the "holy war" psychology of the Arabs was matched by an apocalyptic psychology within Israel, and the United States should not assume Israel could be ordered not to fight in defense of its interests. Rusk stated that the United States Government had historically supported the position of the political independence and territorial integrity of the Near Eastern countries, and had had a strong case in the past for being even-handed in its dealings with these nations.

The Secretary then referred to commitments made by the United States at the end of the Suez Crisis, and he commented that as a part of the settlement which obtained the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Sinai, including Sharm-el-Sheikh, the United States had assured Israel that it would support an international right of passage through the Strait of Tiran. Israel's statement guaranteeing to Israeli flagships the right of self-protection under Article 51 of the U.N. Charter had been drafted in consultation with Secretary Dulles. Rusk added that Egypt was aware of these positions taken by the United States and Israel, and, although Egypt did not agree with them, it was the beneficiary of the arrangements which were made.

The Secretary said that he was presenting these considerations in order to enlist the best thought of the Ambassadors in Arab capitals as to profitable approaches to the problem. The United States could not ask Israel to accept the status

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quo in the Strait, nor could the United States throw up its hands and say that, in the event of war, it would attempt to remain neutral.¹

Jordanian Views of the U.S. Position

Among Israel's Arab neighbors most likely to be involved in any hostilities, Jordan was the one country where the United States retained some influence. Jordanian Chief of Staff Amer Kammash told an official of the American Embassy in Amman on June 3 that his government had no intention of loosening the close bond which existed between Jordan and the United States. He made the comment that Hussein and the Government of Jordan did not trust Nasser, and that there would be no Palestine Liberation Army troops in Jordan. Kammash made it clear that his country did not want war and that, if war could be avoided, he would count on the disillusionment of the Arab man-in-the-street to bring about dissatisfaction with Nasser, who was responsible for whipping up the war fever in the first place. By signing the pact with Nasser, Kammash explained, it had been Hussein's hope to shift Jordan's burden and responsibility for the "Palestine problem" onto Nasser's shoulders. Speaking in an entirely friendly manner, Kammash continued by pointing to the dangers involved in the existing tensions in the Jordanian sector of Jerusalem, and stated that Syria would accuse the Jordanians of perfidy if Jordan allowed Israeli convoys to pass through Jordanian Jerusalem.

Regarding the case of the S.S. Green Island, which had snowballed into a cause célèbre, Kammash said that Jordan understood why the Green Island was not coming to Aqaba, but the rest of the Arab world did not, since ships of other flags were arriving daily at Aqaba. Kammash then asked if the United States could have planes fly even one hundred rounds of ammunition from the cargo of the Green Island to Amman, proving by this gesture that the United States was not suspending arms shipments already en route to Arab countries.

At a subsequent meeting among Ambassador Burns, Prime Minister Sad Juma, and Chief of Staff Kammash on June 3, Burns reviewed the U.S. position. Juma listened attentively, and,

¹ To Arab Capitals, cirtel. 207956, June 3, 1967, secret/nodis/eyes only for Ambassador from Secretary.

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at the conclusion of Ambassador Burns' presentation, he commented, "We appreciate your motives because we are earnestly seeking peace in this crisis as well." The Prime Minister's only other substantive remark was that the Government of Jordan, along with all other Arab governments, fully supported President Nasser's action in closing the Strait of Tiran to Israeli shipping. Juma foresaw "no possibility the Israelis would regain the rights they had forcibly seized in 1956." Although Juma did not address himself specifically to the issue of the rights of passage of strategic materials destined for Eilat, Embassy Amman reported that it had no reason to believe that the Government of Jordan was prepared to challenge any aspect of Nasser's position on the Strait.

Embassy Amman did feel, however, that Jordan was well prepared for war. The older segment of the population, recalling the fighting of the 1940's, was apprehensive, but the young people seemed ready for war and wanted it to begin immediately. Palestinians of all classes were reported to be "extraordinarily keyed up", and they appeared to be united in their desire to keep the United States from intervening. A moderate and decidedly pro-U.S. senior Jordanian official had discussed with Embassy Amman a wire service commentary that the United States was possibly prepared to open the Strait of Tiran by force. The official was dumbfounded that the United States might even consider such an act, and said, "You must be mad. Not a single Arab, no matter how much he might secretly want to see Nasser's decline, wants to see it caused by the issue of the Straits of Tiran, because the Straits of Tiran issue is an all-Arab issue. In this case, all of us respect Nasser's stand and his initiative."¹

Recommendations of Embassy Amman To End
U.S. Commitments in the Middle East

On June 4, in response to Secretary Rusk's circular telegram of the previous day, Ambassador Burns transmitted his views on the Arab-Israeli impasse for the Department's consideration. Burns opened his remarks by saying that the "basic confrontation" was a matter of settling the so-called "Palestine

¹From Amman, tel. 4028, June 3, 1967, secret/limdis; from Amman, tel. 4029, June 3, 1967, secret; from Amman, tel. 4030, June 3, 1967, secret/exdis.

problem". He called the Gulf of Aqaba a symptom of the real difficulty and said that, because the root of the problem lay in the Palestine question, no solution could be expected on the Strait of Tiran until a compromise had been reached on the Palestine problem as a whole. In Burns' opinion, settlement of this question was the only way to prevent war in the Middle East. He then made the formal recommendation that the President announce U.S. recognition of this fact, and couple his announcement with a suggestion for the convocation of a convention to deal with the problem. If at any moment between the convening and conclusion of this convention, a state in the Middle East initiated military action against a neighbor, the United States would move for immediate U.N. intervention to stop the military action.

Burns recommended that the United States Government talk with the Arabs and Israelis privately, and put them on firm notice that, until a convention had been called and concluded, any outstanding U.S. guarantees would not apply in the case of an aggressor in hostilities. The successful conclusion of a convention would make these guarantees superfluous, he argued, and since a peaceful solution was important to world peace and to the United States, any nation which resorted to force rather than going to the conference would forfeit U.S. support.

Ambassador Burns recognized the possibility that either the Arabs or the Israelis might refuse to take part in such a convention. On the other hand, he felt that there could be strong reasons for both nations to attend a conference. Each of them wanted a solution to the Palestine question, though, of course, on different terms. It was Burns' hope that a mutually conciliatory attitude, linked with a sufficient cooling of passions on both sides, could produce effective progress. Burns stated that he realized the United States Government was concerned about the necessity to honor its commitments given in the past relating to the Middle East. Burns said he realized what he was about to say might be a shock, but it was his earnest conviction that, where the vital national security interest of the United States was concerned, it would be better not to honor a commitment if to do so would more seriously endanger the overall vital national interest. He reasoned that, in the case of non-Middle East commitments, failure to honor them would effect U.S. area interests and the confidence of U.S. allies; therefore, national interest was served by honoring them. On the other hand, to honor U.S. commitments in the Middle East at that moment would be

detrimental to the vital national interest of the United States on an area basis as well as relative to the risks of World War III.

In Burns' judgment, the United States was not obliged "in black and white to use force". He concluded by urging that the United States amend its unilateral guarantee of the territorial integrity of all Middle Eastern states by a statement that existing guarantees would not apply in the event of aggression; not to do so would be detrimental to the interests of world peace in the face of the Middle East crisis as it had developed.¹

Further U.S. Efforts To Promote the
Proposed Maritime Declaration

On June 4 members of the Control Group on the Middle East Crisis became concerned about the apparent lack of success in gaining adherents to the Maritime Declaration. Deane Hinton drafted a memorandum to Assistant Secretary Battle in which he called attention to the fact that a change in the draft Maritime Declaration might bring in the Belgians and Italians. Belgium desired a paragraph apparently intended to put more emphasis on a U.S. solution, and Hinton felt that such an interpolation might help swing the Italians into agreement. "Opening the text for changes now after seven countries are agreed is tricky business, but on balance, might buy a couple more key adherents," Hinton added. The sentence Hinton proposed to use to amend the first paragraph was underscored in his memorandum:

"The Governments of maritime nations subscribing to this Declaration express their grave concern at recent developments in the Middle East which are currently under consideration in the United Nations Security Council. Our Governments reaffirm their hope that a peaceful settlement of the crisis may be found within the United Nations. As Members of the United Nations committed to the Purposes and Principle set forth in the Charter, we are convinced that scrupulous

¹From Amman, tel. 4040, June 4, 1967, ~~secret.~~

respect for the principles of international law regarding freedom of navigation on international waterways is indispensable."¹

In the late morning of June 4, Britain's Ambassador Dean telephoned the Department to express his Government's agreement with the idea that the Declaration would best be issued simultaneously by the signatories of the various capitals, and that then all the signatories would forward it separately to the U.N. Security Council for circulation. Dean indicated that the United Kingdom felt it was acceptable to approach three Latin American countries, and said that the United Kingdom had instructed its Ambassadors to follow up in the capitals of these countries. The British thought that the reference to the United Nations which Belgium wanted inserted in the Declaration might help and that an appropriate place for the desired reference was at the end of paragraph 2. Ambassador Dean concluded emphatically that it was most important to get the Germans to sign the Declaration, especially if the Italians and French did not sign.²

During the early afternoon of the same day, Hinton again drafted a memorandum to Assistant Secretary Battle, setting forth his concern at "widespread signs of resistance and in some cases of negativism toward the draft Maritime Declaration". He cited the illustration of the Italian Cabinet, which was prepared as of that moment to support the principles of the Declaration in a U.N. resolution, but opposed a separate declaration by the Maritime powers. Hinton said there were no additional countries in the "certain" or "probable" categories since the afternoon of June 3. He recommended top-level approaches to certain key countries by the Secretary or by letter from the President, and he also suggested that Ambassadors of all "target" countries except those "clearly on board" or "already approached at high level here" should be called in

¹Memorandum from EUR/RPE (Hinton) to NEA (Battle), June 4, 1967, ~~secret/limdis.~~

²Memorandum of telephone conversation between Ambassador Dean and R. T. Grey (M), June 4, 1967, ~~secret.~~

the following day and met at the Assistant Secretary level. Hinton promised an action list, by Bureau, later in the day.¹

With the outbreak of full-scale fighting between Israel and the U.A.R. on Monday morning, June 5, the Department instructed all posts to suspend all Maritime Declaration activities. On June 6, in a memorandum to the Control Group, Assistant Secretary Battle offered several arguments against pushing the Maritime Declaration at that time. He reasoned that there was a need not to complicate the overriding objective of obtaining a cease-fire resolution in the Security Council, and said that pressure to gain acceptance of the Declaration would have appeared to be a departure from the U.S. position of even-handedness. Battle added that increased emphasis on the Maritime Declaration would be exploited by Arab extremists as evidence of U.S. hostility and as justification for nationalizing U.S. oil concessions. He also viewed U.S. possibilities of pressing for the acceptance of the Declaration as being definitely greater after a cease-fire had been achieved, although he was not prepared to say how many foreign adherents would then be available. Battle then concluded by recommending that Maritime Declaration activities within the Department should be suspended and that the utility of the Declaration in the post-war bargaining situation should be reviewed after the end of hostilities. He cautioned members of the Control Group, however, to do nothing to indicate any shift in the fundamental U.S. position on freedom of passage through the Strait of Tiran.²

¹Memoranda from Hinton (EUR/RPE) to Battle (NEA), June 4, 1967, both secret/limdis.

²To all American diplomatic posts, cirtel. 208067, June 5, 1967, secret/limdis; memorandum of conversation by EUR-Deane R. Hinton between Sir Patrick Dean, Under Secretary Rostow, and others, June 5, 1967, secret/limdis; memorandum from Under Secretary Battle for the Control Group, June 6, 1967, secret.

Chapter ThreeUNITED STATES POLICY DURING THE PERIOD OF HOSTILITIES,
JUNE 5-10Conflicting Reports on the Origins of
Egyptian-Israeli Hostilities

In the early morning hours of June 5, the Department of State began to receive cables concerning the outbreak of hostilities between the U.A.R. and Israel. From Cairo, the American Ambassador-designate, Richard H. Nolte, reported that, according to Cairo Radio, the Israeli Air Force had begun the attack, bombing Cairo and other places; the Embassy stated that it was unable to confirm the location of the bombing.¹ At the same time that Embassy Cairo was reporting, the Department cabled several Middle East posts that the Foreign Broadcast Information Service and the news services were reporting the outbreak of fierce fighting on the Israeli-Egyptian border. The Department said that, while Jerusalem Radio was saying that Israel had reacted to a forward movement of Egyptian armed force, Cairo Radio was saying that Israel had begun the action. The Department requested comments from the addressee posts.²

From Tel Aviv, Ambassador Barbour cabled the Department that he had just seen Foreign Minister Abba Eban at the latter's request. After summarizing hostile U.A.R. actions in the preceding weeks, Eban told Barbour that early that morning the Israelis had observed Egyptian units in Sinai moving in large numbers toward Israel and that, in fact, a "considerable force penetrated Israeli territory, clashing with Israeli ground forces". As a result, the Government of Israel had given the order to attack. Eban said that Jordan had claimed erroneously that the Israelis had attacked the Jordanian air base at Mafraq, possibly to justify King Hussein's keeping his forces back to protect Jordanian airfields. Eban indicated that the Syrians had not yet joined the conflict.

¹From Cairo, tel. 8497, June 5, 1967, unclassified.

²To Amman, Baghdad, Beirut, Cairo, Damascus, Jerusalem, Port Said, and Tel Aviv, tel. 208029, June 5, 1967, ~~confidential~~.

Barbour informed the Department that, in a further effort to justify Israel's actions, Eban was drafting messages to President Johnson and Chairman Kosygin to be delivered later in the day. The letters would set forth the developments surrounding Nasser's build-up, the reasons for the Israeli counter-action (which was based on Article 51 of the U.N. Charter), and the conviction that "the world understands Israel is [the] victim of Nasser's aggression." The letters would add that Israel had no intention of taking advantage of the situation to enlarge its territory and was hopeful that peace could be restored "within present boundaries". Israel also hoped the conflict could be localized and, in this regard, in the letter to President Johnson would ask U.S. help in restraining any Soviet initiative. In the letter to Chairman Kosygin, the Israeli Government would ask the Soviet Union to join in an effort "to secure peace based on the independence and territorial integrity of all nations."¹ Ambassador Nolte cabled from Cairo that Egyptian Foreign Minister Mahmud Riad had telephoned the Embassy (12 Noon, Cairo time) to make it explicitly clear that Israel had launched the attack. Riad stated further that, for the time being, the decision on the proposed visit of Vice President Zakariyah Mohieddin to Washington was being kept open. Nolte urged the Department to observe "strict and explicit neutrality in word and action" for the sake of the safety of American citizens in the entire area and with a view to a possible constructive U.S. role in ending the fighting.

From the Embassy's own observations, Nolte reported there had been "unusual activity in U.A.R. forces before raids at 0900 including truck load military police at intersections along Nile corniche at 0800 as though in preparation major troop movement." An Egyptian commercial airlines pilot had been summoned to the Cairo airport at 4:30 a.m. and had found large numbers of pilots in uniform. The Embassy said that anti-aircraft firing over the western fringe of Cairo was visible at 10:50 a.m.²

¹From Tel Aviv, tels. 3928 and 3946, June 5, 1967, ~~secret/~~ exdis.

²From Cairo, tel. 8504, confidential, and tel. 8511, ~~secret~~, both June 5, 1967.

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At noon on June 5, Ambassador Barbour reported from Tel Aviv, General Meir Amit, Coordinator of Israeli Intelligence and Security, briefed him and President Johnson's special representative to Israel, Harry McPherson of the White House staff, on the origins of the Egyptian-Israeli conflict. Amit summarized the developments of the previous three weeks as seen from the Israeli point of view. He thought Nasser's actions had achieved a momentum he could not control. These comprised four steps: (1) a three-way agreement between Syria, the U.A.R. and the U.S.S.R. to have Nasser make a show of force in Sinai to increase his prestige; (2) Nasser's request that UNEF move back from its positions on the borders, and the U.N. Secretary-General's insistence that UNEF remain in place or move entirely (General Amit said, "In the circumstances, Nasser had no choice but to ask them to withdraw completely"); (3) the closing of the Straits of Tiran on May 23, probably unpremeditated, and (4) a development of the last 48 hours--the movement of the Egyptian Fourth Armored Division and the "crack" Shasli Brigade, which together included 400 tanks, to encircle and cut off Eilat, thus linking up Egypt with Jordan.

In addition, hasty withdrawals of troops from Yemen by the U.A.R. and evidence of major developments in Jordan corroborated, in General Amit's view, Israeli belief in the existence of "this Egyptian plan". For example, an Egyptian general, Muhammad Riyadh, had taken charge of Jordanian forces, and Israel had intercepted U.A.R. orders to move troops to the west bank of the River Jordan. The U.A.R. commander had asked for Egyptian forces in Jordan because troops promised by Iraq were too slow in arriving. Orders had been issued for Egyptian commandos in Jordan to capture Israeli airfields. On June 4, an initial contingent of Iraq troops and MIG airplanes had arrived in Jordan. Orders had also been given for fedaheen raids "when war begins".

Early that morning (June 5), Amit continued, the Egyptians had shelled three settlements near the Gaza strip, and Egyptian planes had penetrated Israel airspace. Amit added that Israel had exercised maximum restraint which, in his view, might have encouraged Nasser to progress from a mere show of force to what the Israelis were now convinced was a master plan to dismember Israel. He stated that the Israelis had decided "yesterday" (June 4) that, in case of Egyptian aggression, Israel would "punch

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all the buttons" essential for self-defense. He also cited the Egyptian defense agreement with Iraq, the possibility of a Lebanese parley with Nasser, indications that King Faisal of Saudi Arabia was coming to Cairo, an order of the day issued by the Egyptian commander in Jordan the day before urging his troops to fight a holy war, and Nasser's inflammatory speech on the evening of June 4 as completing Egypt's military and diplomatic encirclement of Israel. Amit then stated that developments to date resembled the domino theory, in that Turkey and Iran would shortly be under great Soviet pressure to side with the Arabs. He hoped Nasser would collapse and that it would then be possible to rearrange matters on a more stable basis.

The General then expressed candidly his opinion that U.S. efforts to restrain Israel had assisted Nasser in forming his plan of encirclement. Because of delay, Israel's task had become much more difficult than it would have been had hostilities occurred earlier. Regarding U.S. help, Amit said Israel did not want soldiers, but money and weapons; it also wanted the United States to isolate the Soviets from the area and give Israel political backing. Amit acknowledged that he was discussing political matters which were outside his area of responsibility but stressed that his views reflected "the unanimous opinion of the uniformed Israel defense establishment".¹

Initial U.S. Actions and Consultations

However confusing and contradictory the reports from the field, it was clear to Washington officials that to bring the conflict quickly to a halt the obvious first step was to resort to the U.N. Security Council. This body had conducted inconclusive deliberations throughout the last week in May in an effort to forestall armed action, but, with fighting under way, the Council might galvanize itself into action. Thus, at 4:40 a.m. on June 5, Ambassador Goldberg in New York telephoned U.N. Under Secretary Ralph Bunche to tell him about the outbreak of hostilities. Bunche informed Goldberg that he had already received word from General I.J. Rikhye, Commander of UNEF in the Gaza Strip, of air raids on Cairo and in the Sinai peninsula. Rikhye had reported that UNEF forces were in the main camp at Rafah in Gaza, not on the Egyptian-Israeli borders, but enough were available to supervise a cease-fire. At 5:15 a.m., the President of the U.N.

¹From Tel Aviv, tel. 3937, June 5, 1967, secret/exdis.

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Security Council, Hans Tabor of Denmark, informed Goldberg that the Soviet and British members of the Council had agreed to a Security Council meeting that morning. Tabor added that the French representative had said he would follow the majority but "wondered whether the meeting was necessary." Tabor said he was therefore calling for a meeting at 9:30 a.m.¹

Early in the morning, the White House issued a statement expressing the deep distress of the United States that fighting had broken out in the Middle East—"an eventuality we had sought to prevent". Calling attention to the fact that the U.N. Security Council had been called into urgent session, the statement urged "all parties to support the Security Council in bringing about an immediate cease-fire." It also declared: "The United States will devote all its energies to bring about an end to the fighting and a new beginning of programs to assure the peace and development of the entire area."²

The British Ambassador, Sir Patrick Dean, telephoned Secretary Rusk to relay a message from Foreign Secretary Brown, asking what steps the United States was contemplating. Rusk told Dean that the United States thought it would be possible to get a cease-fire resolution from the Security Council. He added that the United States had told the Russians of U.S. astonishment at the outbreak, that the United States had thought there were commitments on both sides not to start anything, and that a push should be made for a Security Council cease-fire resolution. Rusk stated the United States had "had no inkling of the outbreak from either side".³

Ambassador Dean then called on Under Secretary Rostow at 9:00 a.m. to review the Middle East situation. Rostow informed Dean of the following developments: (1) the United States had had constructive exchanges of messages since five o'clock that

¹From USUN, tel. 5623, June 5, 1967, ~~confidential~~.

²Department of State Bulletin, June 26, 1967, p. 949.

³To London, tel. 208047, June 5, 1967, ~~secret/exdis~~.

morning with the Soviets;* (2) the Israelis had given assurances that they desired no additional territory and would seek to localize the conflict; (3) the United States had provided its Mission at the United Nations with a simple cease-fire resolution which it hoped the Security Council President would offer as his own; and (4) the White House had issued a statement calling for a cease-fire.

Rostow then posed a series of questions to Dean. He asked for British reaction to his "tentative and personal" view that the United States and the United Kingdom should continue to work for the Maritime Declaration, for its basic purpose was political, and it might be of use in achieving a settlement. Dean replied that, if the U.S.S.R. cooperated in obtaining a cease-fire, it might not be a good idea to pursue a Declaration which the Russians might not favor. Rostow then asked, again on a personal basis, if the United Kingdom agreed that it and the United States should now give up contingency plans for a Gulf of Aqaba naval force. Dean agreed to consult his Government on this point.

Dean inquired whether the United States knew of Jordanian reports that a French carrier had delivered aircraft to Israel. Rostow answered that the United States had heard the reports but thought them untrue. He then informed Dean that he was calling in the Arab Ambassadors to explain the even-handed position of the United States, to urge a Security Council cease-fire resolution, and to stress the need to protect American and other lives in Arab countries. The United States was particularly concerned over reports of mob action against the American Embassy in Benghazi.

Rostow felt there was great urgency in proceeding with economic talks about oil and finance. The discussion closed with questions concerning the utility of the early establishment of a Special Middle East Consultative Group in NATO. Rostow thought that in view of the outbreak of fighting and the common U.S.-U.K. long-range plans for NATO's future, such a Group should be established. It was a serious long-range American policy to persuade NATO countries to take more interest in the rest of the world; the current situation offered an opportunity to begin. Rostow said he had agreed with the position Dean had expressed over the weekend

*The actual texts of the exchanges between Moscow and Washington via the "Hot Line" on June 5 were not made available to the Historical Office in its preparation of this study.

that the formation of such a group would have been confusing, particularly with the Maritime Declaration and the naval force operation under way. The outbreak of hostilities had changed this. Rostow said he was certain that Secretary Rusk would advocate a special Middle East Consultative Group at the Ministerial meeting scheduled to begin June 12. Dean replied that he would put these views to the Foreign Office but that, personally, he thought that, given the time pressures, the proposal would be more workable after Ministerial meeting.¹

After seeing Ambassador Dean, Under Secretary Rostow called in the Israeli Chargé Ephraim Evron. Rostow told Evron that the United States had had constructive exchanges with the Russians. The Soviet Government, while casting no blame on Israel, had urged the United States to use its strongest "good offices" with Israel to achieve a cease-fire. The Soviets had said they would make similar representations in Tel Aviv. Evron asked if the Soviets had revealed their position on the Straits of Tiran. Rostow replied they had not. Evron promised to cable his government, urging a rapid cease-fire.²

Following his meeting with Israeli Chargé Evron, Rostow called in the Chiefs of Mission of the following Arab states: the U.A.R., Syria, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, and Yemen. He told the Ambassadors he wished to inform them of the U.S. position on the regrettable developments in the Middle East. The outbreak of hostilities represented a failure of diplomacy. The United States had tried to use all its influence on both sides to prevent the firing of the first shot. It had looked forward to the visit to Washington of U.A.R. Vice President Mhieddin. It was regrettable that Mhieddin had asked to postpone his visit, but the United States was gratified he had not cancelled it.

¹To London, tel. 208140, secret/exdis; circular telegram 208032 to all Diplomatic and Consular posts, confidential; and memorandum by Hinton (EUR/RPE) of conversation between Dean (UK) and Rostow, secret; all June 5, 1967.

²To Tel Aviv (repeated to all Middle East and North African posts) tel. 208222, June 5, 1967, secret/exdis.

Rostow then read the full text of the White House statement of that morning and told the Ambassadors about the U.S. resolution calling for a cease-fire which would be presented in the U.N. Security Council. Rostow also asked that all Arab governments give full protection to U.S. diplomatic establishments and citizens.

U.A.R. Ambassador Mostafa Kamel, as dean of the diplomatic representatives present, replied to Rostow, and agreed that the situation was deplorable. He read a message from the Egyptian Foreign Office accusing Israel of firing the first shot and of trying to deceive world opinion. The Arabs had kept their word, Kamel said, and believed the United Nations to be the proper place for settling the dispute. The Israelis, by their action, had proved they did not respect the U.N. Charter or the efforts of the Security Council and had destroyed the diplomatic efforts of the U.S. Government and the Arabs.

Kamel then upbraided leading U.S. newspapers, as well as Senators and Congressmen, for their constant repetition of the theme that "time was working against Israel". This was either encouragement or endorsement of the Israeli attack. He referred to the visits of the Foreign Ministers of Lebanon and Iraq to the United States and of the U.N. Secretary General to Cairo. He maintained there had been no time to reap the fruit of any of these efforts.

With regard to the U.S. Government appeal for a cease-fire, Kamel stated the Arab ambassadors were uninstructed, but since the Arabs had been attacked they were defending themselves. Kamel assured Rostow that the Arab governments would protect Americans not only because international law demanded it but because the Arabs were a hospitable and dignified race. He admitted the possibility of error but said all ambassadors would appeal to their governments to redouble their efforts.

In reply, Rostow reiterated his defense of U.S. actions and support of the territorial integrity and political independence of all the states of the Middle East. He asked for any documentation concerning the Egyptian charge that Israel had begun hostilities. He said the United States wanted an end to the fighting and a new beginning of programs for peace and development of the area. The United States was aware of the difficulties of such problems as the Gulf of Aqaba, but these problems must be resolved peacefully.

Kamel warned that Israel was doing everything to bring the United States in on its side and urged the United States not to become a third party. All Arabs were watching U.S. actions, Kamel stated, and other "friendly powers" would also be watching. In answer to these observations, Rostow maintained that the United States had pursued an even-handed policy based on two elements: the international character of the Gulf of Aqaba, and U.S. opposition to aggression. He denied U.S. involvement in the dispute and maintained that it had only tried to prevent the outbreak of war.¹

In Paris, Ambassador-at-Large W. Averell Harriman met with the Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, at noon on June 5.² Harriman explained U.S. attempts to restrain both Israel and the Arabs, the possible Soviet encouragement of Damascus and Cairo belligerence, the U.S. belief that the Soviets did not want military action, and Soviet surprise over Nasser's closing of the Gulf of Aqaba. Harriman said the President believed the Shah's interest was to remain as aloof as possible, to refrain from interrupting oil shipments, and to use his influence, particularly with King Faisal of Saudi Arabia. The President was most interested in getting the Shah's opinions and judgment.

The Shah replied that perhaps it was better not to talk about the past, but he reminded Harriman of U.S. assistance to Nasser and inability to accept the inevitability of Nasser's aggressive policies. He felt the United States had missed the opportunity to stop Nasser over other issues in the past, citing the situation in Yemen and the use of poison gas. Things had since become more difficult, for all Arabs were united against Israel. For example, his Ambassador had reported that Faisal would give full support to Nasser. He said the Soviet Ambassador had called on him that morning and had stated the hostilities should be stopped, that the French might be useful, and that Security Council action should be sought.

¹To all American Diplomatic Posts, circular tel. 208191, June 5, 1967, confidential.

²Harriman was representing President Johnson at ceremonies marking the 20th anniversary of the Marshall Plan; the Shah had interrupted at Paris his proposed visit to the United States.

The Shah emphasized several times that the long-range problem was how to stop Nasser in the future. He said that "some other issue than Israel must be found." Although he considered Nasser a dangerous and aggressive dictator, interested only in his own aggrandizement, the Shah stated that Iran could not oppose a Moslem cause. The Shah would, therefore, have to give lip-service support to Egypt. He suggested that the United States should give the impression of wanting to stop the fighting, but implied that he hoped Nasser's forces would be humiliated. He considered the long-range objective of both the United States and Iran to be "how Nasser could be destroyed".

The Shah then stated that he must return home at once rather than continue his trip to Washington and Montreal. He insisted that Iran must be militarily strong enough to deal with Nasser and Iraq without U.S. intervention. He referred to the extensive U.S. aid to Turkey and regretted that the United States had not done more for Iran.

Harriman offered to call on the Shah the following day and told him the United States would continue to consult him closely. The Shah then repeated what he had said about his country's position in the Middle East and reiterated his opinion that Nasser's influence must be reduced and eventually destroyed or there would be no peace. He said oil shipments would continue and that he would attempt to calm the situation.¹

On the afternoon of June 5, Under Secretary Rostow held a briefing on the Middle Eastern situation for Ambassadors or their representatives from Western European countries. The group included representatives of the NATO countries (except Greece and Turkey), Austria, Finland, Ireland, Malta, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. Rostow covered the genesis of the crisis, the background to recent U.S. diplomatic efforts, and the U.S. attitude toward the immediate conflict.

Rostow indicated that the crisis began when Syrian raids into Israel increased and rumors spread around the Arab world that Israel was planning to attack Syria. The U.A.R. then mobilized, moved its army to the Israeli frontier, and asked

¹From Paris, tel. 19869, June 5, 1967, secret/exdis, for the President and the Secretary of State.

the U.N. Secretary-General to move UNEF forces back from the Gaza area. Instead, U Thant, without consultation, had pulled UNEF completely out of the U.A.R., described by Rostow as "a most damaging step". This action had permitted the U.A.R. to regain control of the Strait of Tiran, and Nasser had then announced the closing of the Strait to Israeli flag vessels and other flag vessels carrying strategic materials (including oil) to Israel.

The Government of Israel regarded freedom of navigation through the Strait of Tiran as vital to its national interest and believed that the closing of the Strait entitled Israel to take action under Article 51 of the U.N. Charter. The United States supported the position that the Strait of Tiran was an international waterway.

From the moment of the closing of the Strait, the U.S. Government had urged restraint on Israel, Rostow continued. The United States believed that war had been avoided on May 23 only because Washington officials had revealed to the Government of Israel the U.K. proposal concerning a Maritime Declaration and an international naval force to test the blockade. Foreign Minister Eban had visited Washington to test the depth of the U.S. commitment to this idea and had gone away satisfied. The U.S. Government had then worked on this proposal with the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and others. Rostow stressed that the question of a joint naval force had been considered as a last resort and would have been used only if all peaceful actions within and without the United Nations had been exhausted. The United States had also discussed the Straits question with U.A.R. officials and had sent a message to Nasser at the highest level and despatched a special representative to Cairo. The Egyptian Vice President had been scheduled to visit Washington on June 7 for further discussions. Finally, the United States had worked in the United Nations to secure a resolution restoring the situation to that prior to the closing of the Strait.

With respect to the outbreak of hostilities, Rostow told the European Ambassadors the facts were difficult to determine--i.e., the United States did not know who fired first or how the fighting was developing. Regarding the U.S. attitude, Rostow referred to the White House statement of that morning: the U.S. objective was an immediate cease-fire, an end to fighting, and a new beginning on more basic political, security, and economic development problems. Rostow stated that the

United States had had "active and temperate exchanges with Moscow" concerning the need to restrain both sides. Time would tell whether Soviet actions would correspond to the tenor of these exchanges. The United States had not had time to formulate its position on a cease-fire--withdrawal to original borders or to a position on the actual military lines as of the time the fighting stopped.

Rostow recalled that the United States had favored four-power talks within the U.N. context, but the Soviet Union had refused. The British Ambassador intervened to state that his Government was also interested in a four-power meeting. Asked about continuing efforts to secure a Maritime Declaration, Rostow said no final decision had been made. He thought the related idea of a naval escort had been overtaken by events. Regarding the continuation of military assistance to the belligerents, Rostow said that the United States was reviewing the matter and that no final decisions had been taken, but, in any event, U.S. aid to Middle Eastern countries had not been very great.¹

Arab Charges of U.S. Collusion With
Israel and Breaks in Diplomatic Relations
Between Certain Arab States and the
United States

Early in the fighting on June 5, reports emanated from Jordan that planes from carriers in the U.S. Sixth Fleet had landed in Israel. These reports seemed to lend support to the widespread belief among Egyptians, as gleaned by the press corps

¹To all NATO capitals, Vienna, Helsinki, Dublin, Valletta, Madrid, Stockholm, Bern, USUN, USRO, Polads, and USCINCEUR, USDOCOSOUTH, and US SACLANT, circular tel. 208722, June 6, 1967, secret. On the following day, June 6, Rostow gave the Ambassadors of the Latin American countries a similar briefing (see circular tel. 209109 to all ARA diplomatic posts and Bonn, June 7, 1967, secret). On June 7, he briefed the envoys from East Asian countries (see circular tel. 209155 to all East Asian posts, June 7, 1967, confidential) and the Ambassadors from African Governments (see circular tel. 209524 to all African posts, June 8, 1967, limited official use).

in Cairo, that the United States would intervene militarily if Israel's defeat appeared imminent. They also affected Ambassador Nolte's relations with Egyptian officialdom. As he informed the Department, the Ambassador's contacts with officials during the day had been by telephone, and most of these contacts had been cordial, but a note of grimness had gradually crept in "as though they were hearing rumors of some U.S. involvement ... and were believing them." Nolte suggested that a declaration of U.S. non-involvement would be very useful.¹

At his noon press briefing on June 5, the Director of the Department's Office of News, Robert J. McCloskey, attempted to allay suspicion about the U.S. role in the Middle East conflict by declaring that the United States was "neutral in thought, word, and deed". Later in the day, speaking with newsmen at the White House, Secretary Rusk said: "I want to emphasize that any use of this word 'neutral', which is a great concept of international law, is not an expression of indifference, and, indeed, indifference is not permitted to us because we have a very heavy obligation under the United Nations Charter, and especially as one of the permanent members of the Security Council, to do everything we can to maintain international peace and security." The Secretary also observed: "We are in a situation where several governments have declared war. We are not a belligerent. We do not have forces involved in this violence."²

Early on June 6, President Nasser issued a statement accusing the United States of having been the prime instigator of the Arab-Israeli conflict. As proof of U.S. complicity with Israel, he cited the use of American carrier-based planes in support of the Israeli attack on Egypt. He then called for an all-out war on "imperialism".³ Briefing newsmen at the White House, Secretary Rusk described Egyptian charges of American collusion with Israel

¹From Cairo, tel. 8539, June 5, 1967, confidential.

²Department of State Bulletin, June 26, 1967, pp. 949-950.

³From Amman, tel. 4084, July 6, 1967, secret/exdis.

as "utterly and wholly false". Rusk added: "I said yesterday that the United States is not a belligerent in this situation. Our forces are not participating in it. There is just no word of truth in the charge that U.S. aircraft have taken part in any of these present operations in the Near East." Asked to speculate on the Arabs' motives in making such charges, the Secretary expressed his belief that "they are trying to create difficulties for Americans in the Near East."¹

The Department instructed Ambassador Burns in Amman to urge King Hussein publicly to refute the canard concerning the use of American planes.² Burns was also to tell the King that the United States expected Jordan to give fullest protection to American citizens in the light of the "gross falsification by Nasser question USG involvement".³ Burns informed the Department that the Arabs appeared to interpret McCloskey's statement about "neutrality" and Rusk's on "non-belligerency" as meaning that the United States maintained its commitments to all nations in the area. Given the adverse course of the war, Burns continued, the Arabs were seeking a scapegoat and were therefore deliberately reading into the U.S. statements a tacit admission of U.S. support of Israel. As Burns put it: "It is no step at all in Arab logic from support to presumption we actively participating."⁴

The Department also sent a circular telegram to all diplomatic posts, except those in the Middle East, London, Paris, and Moscow which had already been informed. The telegram described the false Egyptian charges that U.S. aircraft provided fighter cover over Israel during Israeli raids on the United Arab Republic on June 5. The United Arab Republic had also charged that the United States replaced Israeli aircraft shot down by the Arabs and had played a role against Jordanian forces. The United States instructed all posts to inform their host governments "at highest appropriate level" that the U.A.R. charges were absolutely false.⁵

¹Department of State Bulletin, June 26, 1967, pp. 950-951.

²The King subsequently issued directions for such a denial (from Amman, tel. 4092, June 6, 1967, secret/exdis).

³To Amman, tels. 208420 and 208423, June 6, 1967, secret/exdis.

⁴From Amman, tel. 4091, June 6, 1967, confidential.

⁵Circular tel. 208550, June 6, 1967, unclassified.

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At the end of the day on June 6, the Department sent out another telegram to all posts to inform them that, despite U.S. denials of participation in the war, Egypt, Algeria, Syria, Iraq, the Sudan, and Yemen had broken diplomatic relations with the United States. Morocco had decided not to break, and had asked for material to justify its decision. The Department stated it was preparing an urgent instruction to the embassies in all Arab countries to forestall further breaks and to try to reverse the decision in those capitals where relations had already been severed.

The Department reported further repercussions from the Egyptian charges. The U.A.R. had closed the Suez Canal allegedly because of U.S. and U.K. support of Israeli aggression and the resulting danger of blockage in the Canal from Israeli air attacks. Also, Iraq, Kuwait, and Algeria had announced suspension of oil deliveries to the United States and the United Kingdom.¹

U.S. Efforts To Obtain Iranian and
Lebanese Understanding of Its Position
in the Arab-Israeli Conflict

On the afternoon of June 6, in a conference with Ambassador Hushang Ansary of Iran, Secretary Rusk expressed his feeling that, in the existing situation in the Middle East, it was important for as many countries as possible to remain detached. What was involved was the "Jehad philosophy" of the Arab States, on one side, and the "apocalyptic psychology" of Israel, on the other. Mob pressures made it impossible for Arab countries to be detached. Nasser was riding a tiger; it was difficult to see how he could disengage from a holy war which could not succeed.

Ansary stated that the ill effects of the war were likely to last for some time, and Iran, concerned, hoped for a settlement. Rusk replied that he wanted the Shah to understand that the United States had not been involved in the outbreak of hostilities. The United States had had commitments from both sides not to attack, had received no advance notice from either side, and was making no judgement as to who started the fighting.

¹Circular tel. 208771, June 6, 1967, secret.

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Ansary said he thought the Israelis had felt that time was running out for them. Rusk replied that they had had a report that 400 Egyptian tanks were moving on Eilat. Ansary then said that the Israelis had been concerned about the Egyptian Vice President's proposed visit to Washington, to which Rusk countered that the United States had had no such information from the Israelis.

Rusk then reviewed the history of the previous 10 years--a period of U.S. support for all the states of the area, and of help the United States had given the U.A.R., Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Kuwait. He said all that was forgotten when the issue was Arabs against Israel. Mentioning the use of poison gas in the Yemen by the U.A.R. Rusk said that Nasser's attitude was not in accordance with the usual standards of conduct.

Finally, Ansary asked if the United States and the U.S.S.R. would get together on a resolution in the Security Council. Rusk said that they might, but that it would mean different things to different people and hence might be the beginning rather than the end of a problem. He stressed that the United States could not persuade the Israelis to go back to the status quo before June 5. They had made clear that closing the Straits was a casus belli. In 1957, the United States had persuaded the Israelis to withdraw from the Sinai peninsula on the condition that there would be freedom of passage through the Straits. The United States could not forget such a commitment.¹

Later in the afternoon, the Foreign Minister of Lebanon, Georges Hakim, who had come to the United States to speak at the United Nations, met with Secretary Rusk. The Secretary, first of all, stated that the charges of U.S. aircraft participation in the military action against Egypt were "completely false". The Egyptians and the Russians knew where American carriers were and that American planes were not involved. As a result of the accusations, American lives were endangered, and Rusk said he could not understand the U.A.R. motivation.

¹Memorandum by Eliot (NEA/IRN) of a conversation between Rusk and Ansary, June 6, 1967, confidential.

Hakim warned that Arab-American friendship might well be one of the first casualties of the outbreak. The United States, in the Arabs' view, had been partial to Israel, and, while it was true that the United States had helped the Arabs, such aid had been with limitations. He stated that the Arabs felt that they could not count on American non-involvement if the Arabs got the upper hand. On the other hand, the Arabs did think the Soviet Union was on their side. This disturbed the Lebanese because they wanted to save Arab-U.S. friendship and, in particular, Lebanese-U.S. friendship.

The Secretary traced the history of the previous ten years and pointed out that Egypt had accepted the arrangements made after Suez. Hakim replied that Nasser had been in a weak position at that time and had had no choice but to submit. When the United States made commitments such as President Eisenhower's pledge concerning the right of passage through the Strait of Tiran, Hakim maintained, it transgressed the rights of others. In closing the Strait, Nasser was eliminating Israel's past aggressive gains. The only issue which might be negotiated was that of the passage of tankers bound for Eilat. While it would probably cost somewhat more to supply Israel's petroleum needs by other means, it did not seem to Hakim worth risking tragedy for such a relatively insignificant amount. With the whole Arab world humiliated, Hakim warned, the hostilities would not end with a quick Israeli victory. What would result was undying Arab enmity for the United States and long-term Soviet-Arab cooperation. Hakim also expressed his surprise that the United States favored a simple cease-fire resolution. The Arabs would insist on withdrawal of all Israeli forces and the Soviets would support them.

Hakim then suggested that Israel should be demilitarized, that a binational Palestinian state should be established, and that this state should be integrated into the Arab world as Lebanon had been. The immediate problem would be to get Israel to withdraw to its pre-June 5 borders and negotiate the question of freedom of navigation through the Strait. Perhaps the passage of tankers might be discussed with Nasser.

Hakim thought Nasser wished to avoid a Communist ascendancy in the Arab world, but he might not be able to prevent it. He was the only leader who could get the Arabs to agree on a solution. Hakim therefore hoped the United States would continue to keep in touch with Nasser. Rusk replied that he would do his best, but

that the United States had had difficulties with Nasser, who had more than once blocked forward steps. He said he could not overstress the strength of his reaction to Nasser's charge regarding U.S. planes, when Nasser could easily have found out the facts. However, the Secretary promised, "the U.S. would continue to do its best"; at least the United States could understand Arab feelings, even though it might not always share them.¹

The U.N. Security Council Cease-Fire Resolution

Promptly after the outbreak of hostilities, and as agreed among the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, the United States, and France, the U.N. Security Council had been convened by its President, on the morning of June 5 to attempt to bring about a cease-fire in the Middle East. After listening to a report by the U.N. Secretary-General on latest developments in the area and to charges exchanged between the Egyptian and Israeli representatives respecting blame for the outbreak of fighting, the Council adjourned for "urgent consultations" among its members.

The chief stumbling-block, as it emerged from these consultations was Russian insistence that, as part of a cease-fire, Israel should withdraw all its forces from territories seized since the fighting had begun. The Soviet position on this point was made clear in a message from Chairman Kosygin to Prime Minister Eshkol on June 5 and in one from Kosygin to Prime Minister Wilson of Britain on the 6th,² as well as in the discussions in New York. The

¹Memorandum by Gamon (NEA/ARN) of conversation between Rusk and Hakim, June 6, 1967, secret. On the same day, the Foreign Minister also had a conversation with Under Secretary Rostow, the substance of which was similar to that with the Secretary. See memorandum by Gamon of conversation between Rostow and Hakim, confidential. The Ambassador of Lebanon, Ibrahim El-Ahdab, and Robert B. Houghton (NEA/ARN) were also present during both conversations.

²From Tel Aviv, tel. 3946, June 5, 1967, secret/exdis; from London, tel. 10188, June 6, 1967, secret/exdis.

Soviet Union made it equally clear, however, that it did desire a cease-fire.

In a series of meetings with Ambassador Goldberg on the 6th, Soviet Ambassador Fedorenko gave increasing indications that the Soviet Government might accept a simple cease-fire, leaving the matter of troop withdrawals for later settlement.¹ By the evening of June 6, full agreement had been reached. The Security Council reconvened and adopted a resolution which called upon "the Governments concerned, as a first step, to take forthwith all measures for an immediate cease-fire and for a cessation of all military activities in the area."²

¹From USUN, tels. 5632 and 5638, June 6, 1967, secret/exdis.

²Department of State Bulletin, June 26, 1967, pp. 947-948.

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Effecting the Israeli-Jordanian Cease-Fire

The best prospect for an early cease-fire was on the Jordanian front. With the outbreak of fighting between Israel and Egypt on June 5, the Israeli Government had informed Jordan and had promised that no Israeli move would be made against Jordan unless Jordan took hostile action, in which case Israel would "hit back hard."¹ Despite this warning, the United Arab Command in Jordan, headed by Egyptian General Muhammad Riyadh, had sent forces to occupy the headquarters of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in Jerusalem and to drive back Israeli forces from areas south of the city.² The Israelis took their promised retaliatory action--limited on both sides initially to military targets--and Jordan became Israel's second front.

By the end of the day on June 5, matters had gone very badly for Jordan. Shortly after midnight on June 6, the Department received a cable from Ambassador Burns stating that King Hussein had advised him that, unless the Israelis stopped their attack on Jordan, the country would be finished and so would his regime. He therefore asked the U.S. Government to arrange an immediate cease-fire. The King maintained that his entire army was in the process of being destroyed.³ A little later, Burns cabled that Hussein had not used the phrase "cease-fire" but had demanded "an immediate end to the violent attacks". Burns pointed out that the Israelis "should realize ... what Hussein is trying to do and must do to save himself"--i.e., he had to have a de facto cease-fire without its being de jure.

¹This information was transmitted from the Israeli Foreign Office to General Odd Bull, Chief of Staff of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), to Under Secretary Bunche at U.N. Headquarters, to Ambassador Goldberg (from USUN, tel. 5623, June 5, 1967, confidential).

²From Amman, tel. 4063, June 5, 1967, unclassified.

³From Amman, tel. 4080, June 6, 1967, secret/exdis.

⁴From Amman, tel. 4081, June 6, 1967, secret.

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Elaborating on Hussein's thinking, Burns again cabled that the King stated he could not afford to accept a unilateral cease-fire. He wanted to reduce his own military effort but could not do so unless the Israelis responded. To the best of the King's knowledge, Jordanian forces had not hit civilian targets within Israel, attacks having been aimed at airfields and other military targets. Burns reported the King thought the only solution was that the major powers immediately impose a cease-fire.¹ In another telegram from Amman, Burns added that the King had just called to say that he must have an answer by six o'clock in order to maintain control of the situation in Jordan.²

The Department immediately instructed Ambassador Barbour in Tel Aviv to inform the Israeli Government at the highest available level of Hussein's desire to take steps toward a cease-fire, imparting this information either through the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization or a U.S. Government channel. The Department stated that Barbour should urge the slackening of Israeli attacks against Jerusalem while efforts to bring about a cease-fire proceeded. It was suggested that an immediate offer to accept the Pope's appeal that Jerusalem be considered an open city by both sides might provide a basis for a mutual cease-fire for Jerusalem and its environs. The same telegram urged Burns in Amman to persuade Jordan to take similar action.³

In connection with Jordan's request for a halt to the fighting, Ambassador Barbour reported from Tel Aviv that, while emphasizing that he was acting without instructions (which might or might not come later), he had given the Israelis the substance of Hussein's views on a cease-fire or "some other arrangement to scale down military action". The Israeli Foreign Office had agreed to communicate immediately with the military and let Barbour know the reaction. The Foreign Office added that, according to the latest information, it seemed clear that

¹From Amman, tel. 4084, July 6, 1967, secret/exdis.

²From Amman, tel. 4085, July 6, 1967, secret/exdis.

³To Tel Aviv and Amman, tel. 208420, June 6, 1967, secret/exdis.

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the central authority over Jordanian military forces had disintegrated and that recently Jordanian fighting had been uncoordinated and without tactical objective.¹

From Amman, Ambassador Burns telegraphed Barbour in Tel Aviv to say that he had informed Hussein of the Israeli statements concerning the condition of the Jordanian Army. Hussein had replied that, while it was urgent to stop the fighting, the Israelis must not announce anything publicly, or anarchy would result in Jordan.²

As the battle between Israel and Jordan progressed, Burns reported that King Hussein had summoned individually the Ambassadors of the United Kingdom, France, the United States, and the U.S.S.R., to say that Jordan faced the alternatives of collapse or a cease-fire. He begged all four, acting either unilaterally or through the United Nations, to arrange a cease-fire, preferring that it be unannounced but agreeing to announce it jointly with the Israelis if they insisted.

The King said that the U.A.R. Commander in Jordan, Muhammed Riyadh, had told him he had three alternatives: (1) to accept a cease-fire, (2) to evacuate Jordanian territory west of the River Jordan, or (3) to continue fighting and lose this territory anyway. Riyadh had already informed Nasser of this situation. The Prime Minister had told Burns that, if a cease-fire was not arranged, the Jordanian Government would be unable to maintain law and order and protect Americans "or anyone else".³

Responding to Jordan's urgent appeal for a cease-fire, Ambassador Barbour reported from Tel Aviv to the Department that he had passed the information to the Israeli Prime Minister and had urged Israeli acceptance. Barbour said, however, that he believed it was too late to arouse Israeli interest in saving Hussein or his regime. The Israelis had been prepared to understand his acceptance of the Defense Pact with Egypt in the hope that this would be a face-saving device and that he

¹From Tel Aviv, tel. 3952, June 6, 1967, secret/exdis.

²From Amman, tel. 4092, June 6, 1967, secret/exdis.

³From Amman, tel. 4095, June 6, 1967, secret/exdis.

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would be able to avoid initiating hostilities, in which case the Israelis had not intended to fight on the Jordanian front. But the acceptance of a UAR Commander, followed by Jordanian initiation of hostilities in Jerusalem, and the shelling the day before of some 30 Israeli border settlements, as well as North Tel Aviv the evening before and Netanya on June 6, had disillusioned the Israelis as to Hussein's ability (or even desire) to maintain a moderate stance.¹

As the morning of June 6 wore on, Ambassador Burns cabled his "own appreciation" of the situation from Amman. He felt that the Jordanian Government "could have more difficulty maintaining law and order after a cease-fire than in the absence of one." He asked what would happen when the shattered Jordanian Army returned and was told what really had occurred. He asked further what would happen if Nasser called for Hussein's overthrow so that Jordan could continue the battle.²

The Department, however, asked Embassy Tel Aviv to inform the Israeli Government of Jordan's desire for an immediate cease-fire. It instructed Ambassador Barbour to urge the Israelis to work directly, rather than through the United Nations, in order to "split Jordan off from other Arab states." The Department suggested it might be preferable that the cease-fire remain secret temporarily if King Hussein was to maintain control.³

In reply to Tel Aviv's assessment that the Israelis were probably no longer interested in saving Hussein or his regime, Ambassador Burns cabled that he would wait to tell Hussein that the Israeli answer was "no" to a cease-fire until instructed by the Department.⁴ Soon after sending the above cable, however, Burns informed the Department that Hussein had telephoned urgently wanting to know the Israeli decision. Burns stated he had had no alternative but to tell the King the

¹From Tel Aviv, tel. 3967, June 6, 1967, secret/exdis.

²From Amman, tel. 4099, June 6, 1967, secret/exdis.

³To Amman, tel. 208438, June 6, 1967, secret/exdis.

⁴From Amman, tel. 4101, June 6, 1967, secret/exdis.

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Israeli answer was "no". Burns had then sent an Embassy Officer to brief Hussein on Ambassador Barbour's understanding of the Israeli attitude toward a cease-fire. Hussein indicated that he had to decide quickly whether to attempt to hold the West Bank of the Jordan while waiting for a cease-fire or to withdraw, in order to give himself the best possible military and political advantage. He affirmed that, since the beginning of hostilities, Egyptian General Riyadh had been running the "whole show" and that Riyadh had advised withdrawal from the West Bank. Hussein admitted that no one had anticipated that the conflict would escalate so far and so fast and acknowledged that Nasser had made a major miscalculation on the timing of his initial deployment into Sinai and the closing of the Straits. The King denied that his army had shelled civilian targets but confessed that he could not maintain that his forces had avoided them. The initial bombing of civilians had been done by Israel.¹

With the passage on the evening of June 6 of the U.N. Security Council resolution calling for a cease-fire, and in view of the seriousness of Jordan's position, Secretary Rusk cabled Ambassador Barbour stating his belief that Israel "must look to its own interest in the Arab world." Jordan and King Hussein had been a stabilizing influence, he said, not lightly to be allowed to "go down the drain". Rusk directed the Ambassador to find a way to suggest forcefully to the Israelis that they arrange a cease-fire--at least de facto--with Jordan, in view of the passage by the UN Security Council of the cease-fire resolution. At the same time, he cautioned Barbour to avoid getting into a position of trying to direct Israeli tactics, "particularly military ones". In the light of the unfounded U.A.R. charges, he said, any such implication would be dangerous. He thought, however, that the Ambassador could find a way to handle the situation in Israel's interest as well as in that of the United States.²

As soon as the Jordanians learned of the Security Council cease-fire resolution, Prime Minister Juma informed the U.S. Embassy that the Jordanian Government had asked Baghdad to

¹From Amman, tel. 4108, June 6, 1967, secret/exdis.

²To Tel Aviv, tel. 208748, June 6, 1967, secret/nodis.

intercept Iraqi jets and stop their departure. Juma asked the U.S. Government to inform the Israelis of the Jordanian request to Baghdad and to advise Israel that Jordan desired an immediate cease-fire.¹

The Department immediately cabled Tel Aviv instructing Ambassador Barbour to convey the substance of the above telegram from Amman to the Government of Israel. In the same cable the Department told Ambassador Burns to inform Prime Minister Juma of U.S. satisfaction with Jordan's prompt compliance with the Security Council decision. The Department hoped that Jordan would notify the United Nations officially "at an early date", and urged all addressee posts to guard this information closely to avoid premature exposure of Jordan's initiative "which could entail grave risks for [the] regime."²

On June 7, the Prime Minister of Jordan called in the Ambassadors of the United Kingdom, France, the U.S.S.R., and the United States at 6:00 a.m. (local time). Juma stated that, while Jordan had accepted the cease-fire ordered by the U.N. Security Council and had instructed the army to stop firing as of midnight June 6, the Israeli Army, in spite of Eban's acceptance of the cease-fire, had continued to attack all along the front. Juma said the Jordanians would have to resume fighting unless the Israelis stopped. He said the obvious aim of the Israelis was to secure the West Bank, and that Jordan would bring these violations of the cease-fire to the attention of the Security Council. Meanwhile, he appealed to the Ambassadors to urge their governments to use their influence to stop Israel's attacks.³ A little later, Burns reported that King Hussein told him that what had been thought to have been a de facto cease-fire had broken down. The King made an appeal similar to Juma's "to stop this massive violation of [the] cease-fire."⁴

¹From Amman, tel. 4112, June 6, 1967, secret/limdis.

²To Tel Aviv and Amman, tel. 208784, June 6, 1967, secret/exdis. All Middle East posts, and London, Moscow, Paris, and the Commander of the Sixth Fleet, were sent information copies.

³From Amman, tel. 4119, June 7, 1967, unclassified.

⁴From Amman, tel. 4121, June 7, 1967, confidential.

From Tel Aviv, Ambassador Barbour cabled that he had told the Israeli Government of Burns' report. Israeli reaction was that the information tended to support the theory that the Jordanian Government was not serious and was trying to demonstrate a "deceptive interest in a cease-fire".¹

At 7:45 a.m. the Department cabled Amman that, in response to U.S. urging that they cease fire, the Israelis had replied that the Jordanian Army was still fighting. Most important, the shelling of Jerusalem from Mar Ilias had continued and also heavy fighting in the Nablus-Toubas area. The Israelis believed either that the King and/or the Government were no longer in control, or were being deliberately deceptive. The latter conclusion, the Israelis believed, was supported by the fact that Hussein was apparently still talking about a secret rather than an open cease-fire.

The Department instructed Burns to inform Hussein that the United States was "strongly" urging the Israelis to stop firing. The United States urged the Jordanians as well to cease-fire totally and, especially, that attacks on Jerusalem be stopped in order to reinforce U.S. efforts which were being undermined by Jordanian firing. Also, if Jordan had not formally notified the Security Council of its acceptance of the cease-fire, Burns should urge it to do so. In the same telegram, the Department instructed Barbour to inform the Israeli Government of the U.S. action being taken in Amman and reiterate U.S. concern for a cessation of hostilities with Jordan.²

From Amman Burns reported that Hussein, "as we reported twenty-four hours ago", had accepted an open cease-fire. In Burn's opinion, the Israeli contention that the King was deliberately following a tactic of deception was "hardly supportable". He maintained that the Israelis knew the extent of Jordanian losses and that their goal might "well be [the] destruction [of the] Jordanian Army." Burns felt the regime might fall, and this possibility, plus the threat to the American community, made it imperative that some formula be found to arrange the cease-fire. He admitted that the King

¹From Tel Aviv, tel. 3979, June 7, 1967, secret/exdis.

²To Amman and Tel Aviv, tel. 208800, June 7, 1967, secret.

and the Government might not be in communication with all Army units. He urged that President Johnson telephoned Prime Minister Eshkol to bring the cease-fire into effect as soon as possible.¹

Still unable to achieve a cease-fire observed by both sides, Burns reported that the Jordanian Government was convinced that the Israelis had agreed to a cease-fire with no intention of observing it. The Government had appealed to all four Great Powers and to U Thant to force compliance, but to no avail. Burns stated there was "no one in Jordan who [did] not believe that the U.S. could not have compelled the Israelis to cease their attack." U.S. failure to do so "has raised the most serious doubts in the minds of the entire population as to American intentions."

As reported by Burns, U.A.R. General Riyadh had told the Jordanian Government that the U.S.S.R. was prepared to give the Israelis an ultimatum to cease attacking or risk Soviet intervention. If true, Prime Minister Juma told Burns, the Soviet Union would win the entire Arab world at the expense of the United States.

Juma also told Burns that Egyptian Field Marshal Abdel Hakim Amer, First Vice President of the U.A.R., had recommended on June 6 that the Jordanians withdraw from the West Bank. The Government of Jordan had feared this was an Egyptian trick to get the Jordanians to withdraw first and use this as an excuse for U.A.R. withdrawal from Sinai, for which the U.A.R. could then blame the Jordanians. For this reason, the Jordanians had been reluctant to withdraw at the time and had decided not to when the U.N. cease-fire agreement was reached.

The Jordanian Prime Minister pled with Burns for President Johnson to take immediate action. He asked what had happened to the President's guarantee of the territorial integrity of all states in the Middle East. Burns warned the Department that, if the United States could not pressure Israel "within hours" to halt its military action and publicly claim the

¹From Amman, tel. 4125, June 7, 1967, secret.

credit, the 1200 Americans in Amman and the West Bank could be subject to mob violence, with the Government in no position to offer protection.¹

At this point, the Soviet Union took the initiative through representations in Tel Aviv and the summoning of an urgent session of the U.N. Security Council. In the afternoon of June 7, the Soviet Ambassador in Tel Aviv delivered an oral message from Chairman Kosygin to the Israeli Prime Minister which, after what the Israelis described as the "usual bad language", went on to state that, if Israel did not implement the cease-fire immediately, the U.S.S.R. would (1) reconsider its attitude toward Israel and decide on the future of diplomatic relations with Israel, which, by its actions, had placed itself in opposition to all peace-loving states, and (2) would examine and implement other necessary steps which emanated from the aggressive policy of Israel. Barbour reported that Israeli Soviet experts did not take this as a serious ultimatum, believing that the message contained internal evidence of Soviet intention to reserve considerable room for maneuver. They thought it an effort to retrieve a part of the Soviet diplomatic losses in the present situation, but, at the same time, the Israelis' were puzzled by the new call for a further U.N. Security Council meeting which was reported to them to have been on Soviet initiative.²

In response to Jordan's complaint to the U.N. Security Council that Israel had not complied with the cease-fire resolution of June 6, the Soviet Union called for an urgent meeting of the Council. The Soviet Representative introduced a new resolution, adopted unanimously, which demanded "that the Governments concerned should, as a first step, cease-fire and discontinue all military activities at 2000 hours GMT on 7 June 1967."³

¹From Amman, tel. 4128, June 7, 1967, secret.

²From Tel Aviv, tel. 4000, June 7, 1967, secret.

³U.S. Participation in the UN: Report by the President to the Congress for the Year 1967 (Department of State publication 8399), p. 35; Department of State Bulletin, June 26, 1967, p. 948:

Shortly after midnight on June 8, the Department sent a circular telegram to all Arab capitals informing them that Israel had officially confirmed late on June 7 by a note to the U.N. Security Council President its acceptance of the cease-fire, "provided other parties accept". The note stated further that the cease-fire with Jordan had been in effect since 2000 GMT (the hour demanded by the Security Council resolution of June 7). Israel said it would welcome the announcement of acceptance by other governments involved in the hostilities.¹

U.S. Efforts To Enlist the Support of Saudi Arabia and of the Moslem Members of CENTO To Prevent Further Breaks in Relations Between Arab States and the United States

While the Israeli-Jordanian cease-fire entered into final stages of negotiation, the Department of State actively consulted the Moslem members of CENTO with a view to obtaining their intervention to prevent further breaks in diplomatic relations between Arab States and the United States. In a conversation with Under Secretary Nicholas Katzenbach on June 7, the Ambassador of Iran, Hushang Ansary, pointed out that Nasser was a trouble-maker who would make more trouble if allowed successes. He agreed that Nasser's accusation of American participation in the war was an excuse to cover his military defeat. Katzenbach thought Nasser's actions could be explained, but he did not understand why other Arab governments felt obliged to follow him in breaking relations with the United States. Ansary replied that, when war with Israel was involved, the Arab man-in-the-street controlled his government.

Speculating on how the crisis might be resolved, Ansary thought it would be impossible for Nasser to extricate himself from his defeat unless the Soviet Union stepped in, a move he did not anticipate. Katzenbach suggested that, after the air had been cleared, Iran could be helpful. He said Israel wanted recognition of its existence, to which the Ambassador replied

¹Circular tel. 209166, June 8, 1967, unclassified; from USUN, tel. 5657, June 8, 1967, unclassified; and circular tel. 209163, June 8, 1967, secret.

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that that problem would take a long time to solve although he hoped some Arab leaders would take a realistic view.¹

On the same day, Ambassador Ansary called on Under Secretary Rostow to discuss the Middle East situation. Rostow told Ansary that the United States needed all the assistance the Iranian Government could give in conveying to King Faisal of Saudi Arabia and King Hussein of Jordan the strong U.S. desire to maintain close relations. Ansary replied that the Shah and his government were prepared to do everything possible to help and would try to influence Faisal and Hussein so that they would not take steps which might be regretted later. He doubted that, even after a military defeat, the Arabs would be prepared to acknowledge Israel's existence, but he thought that recognition might come about as a by-product of other arrangements. Ansary thought the Russians would not take the Arab setback lying down and would have to be taken into consideration in any settlement. Rostow thanked Ansary for conveying Iran's attitude and said that "Iran [is] a central part of our hopes for the area."

After Iraq broke relations with the United States, the Department of State asked Turkey to assume the role of protecting power for U.S. interests in Iraq. When handing the Turkish Ambassador, Melih Essenbel, the note making the request, Assistant Secretary Battle emphasized U.S. regret that some Arab countries were breaking their ties, particularly because the break was ostensibly being made on the basis of the "big lie" that U.S. aircraft had attacked Egypt.

Speculating about Nasser's motives, Ambassador Essenbel thought that by blaming the United States for his defeat Nasser sought to put pressure on the Russians to intervene on the Arab side. He personally thought Nasser had overplayed his hand in gambling that the Israelis would not move militarily. Essenbel stated that his thoughts were prompted by a highly confidential talk with the Jordanian Ambassador to the United States, Farhan Shubeilat, and he made a plea for whatever help the United States

¹Memorandum by Eliot (NEA/IRN) of conversation between Katzenbach (U) and Ansary, June 7, 1967, confidential.

²To Tehran, tel. 209086, June 7, 1967, secret/exdis; from Tehran, tel. 4868, June 7, 1967, secret.

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could give to save King Hussein. Esenbel expressed the view that the Jordanian Army was continuing to fight only because it was under Egyptian command.

Battle told Esenbel that the United States had no specific plan for saving Jordan but was thinking of trying to secure "some common-sense arrangement that would promise long-term equilibrium" in the Middle East. Esenbel thought the refugee problem was the key, with the Tiran Straits question secondary, and the Jordan waters question so technical it would be impossible to make the Arab public understand and accept a sensible solution.¹

As a result of these conversations, Secretary Rusk sent a formal message to Foreign Minister Sabri Caglayangil of Turkey, to be delivered by Ambassador Parker T. Hart. The message said that several Arab States had broken relations with the United States, basing their action on false charges that U.S. aircraft had intervened militarily on Israel's side. Expressing the hope that other Arab States would stand firm and not break relations, the Secretary asked whether Turkey would be willing to send messages to King Faisal and King Hussein to advise them that their best interests would not be served by such a step. If his suggestion were approved, the Secretary hoped the messages would be sent promptly.² The Secretary sent a similarly worded message to the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, S.S. Pirzada.³

Toward this same end, President Johnson sent a personal message to King Faisal of Saudi Arabia on June 8 in which he assured the King that he was determined not to permit the crisis to affect the long, close relations between the United States and Saudi Arabia. He assured him further of the falsity of the charges of U.S. military support to Israel. He regretted the break in diplomatic relations with some of the Arab countries, particularly in view of the groundless accusations and because of the urgent need for all to remain in close communication. He called the King's attention to Ambassador Goldberg's invitation

¹To Ankara, tel. 208987, June 7, 1967, confidential and tel. 209142, June 7, 1967, secret.

²To Ankara, tel. 208866, June 7, 1967, secret.

³To Rawalpindi, tel. 208865, June 7, 1967, secret.

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to the United Nations to send investigators to the Sixth Fleet to examine the log books for themselves. The President said he would welcome the King's views on the current situation and that he had instructed his Ambassador to maintain close contact with the Saudi Arabian Government throughout the crisis.¹

On June 10 the Department received a response to its request to Iran to help persuade Saudi Arabia and Jordan to maintain their relations with the United States. Reporting from Tehran, the American Chargé said that the Shah had received assurances from both Jordan and Saudi Arabia that no break in diplomatic relations with the United States was contemplated, "barring any change in the situation".² As of this date, the Department had apparently received no responses to its approaches to Turkey and Pakistan for similar representations and no reply to the President's letter to King Faisal.

Lebanese Efforts To Avoid Involvement
in the Arab-Israeli Conflict

Israel's overwhelmingly successful invasion of Egypt and Jordan and the threat of an Israeli attack on Syria, coupled with Egypt's and Syria's break in diplomatic relations with the United States, placed the Government of Lebanon in an extremely difficult position. With few means of self-defense, Lebanon wished to remain uninvolved in the Arab-Israeli conflict lest it invite a speedy Israeli invasion and jeopardize its traditionally pro-Western ties. At the same time, the Lebanese Government felt obliged to make some gesture of solidarity with the Arab cause in order to appease the distinctly pro-Arab feelings of the Moslem half of Lebanon's population.

The American Ambassador in Beirut, Dwight J. Porter, called on President Charles Helou of Lebanon on June 6. Porter told Helou that he had heard the United Arab Republic had broken diplomatic relations with the United States but that he had

¹To Jidda, tel. 209305, secret/exdis. This telegram was drafted on June 5 but not sent until June 8.

²From Tehran, tel. 4899, June 10, 1967, secret.

had no confirmation of this. If the report were true, Porter said, he understood the pressures which would be placed on other Arab states to follow Cairo's lead. Helou replied that he probably would have no alternative, but he assured the Ambassador he would do his best to provide for the orderly departure of all American citizens. Porter stated the Embassy was not optimistic about the internal security situation in Lebanon, and was preparing for evacuation.¹

Helou also discussed the possibility of "limited" military action against Israel in order to stave off pressures from other Arab governments to open up a Lebanese front with Israel. He said the Syrians were exerting pressure to enable Syrian troops to enter Lebanon. The Lebanese Government, in turn, was stalling, but thought it could not afford "to stay outside the battle-field".²

Early in the morning of June 7 Ambassador Porter had another talk with President Helou concerning the situation. The President said that he accepted the U.S. explanation of the Egyptians' air cover story but stated that the Lebanese Government's view was not important at that moment, for the Lebanese people were listening to Radio Cairo, Nasser was calling the tune, and he, Helou, was powerless to resist. The alternative was civil war and anarchy, with the probable loss of Lebanese sovereignty. According to Porter, this was the unanimous view of the Lebanese leadership, including Christians. The Government was so paralyzed that it refused to carry the denial of U.S. Sixth Fleet involvement for fear of antagonizing Nasser and the street mobs. In view of this situation, Porter stated he still thought it was essential to evacuate as many Americans as possible that day.³

Later in the day Porter reported that the Lebanese Cabinet had been meeting for the past two and one-half hours and that he had been informed by a "confidential source" that the question of breaking diplomatic relations had not yet been reached. Porter

¹From Beirut, tel. 11281, June 6, 1967, confidential.

²From Beirut, tel. 11282, June 6, 1967, secret/exdis.

³From Beirut, tel. 11299, June 7, 1967, secret.

said that, in view of the likelihood of a break or at least withdrawal of the Lebanese Ambassador from Washington, he intended to depart for Athens on the last evacuation flight, leaving the Deputy Chief of Mission as Chargé. Porter reasoned that he could return from Athens quickly if there was no rupture but thought that his departure would have a "salutary" effect.¹

The Department immediately instructed Porter to remain in Beirut unless there were factors of which the Department was unaware. In the Department's opinion, Porter's leaving, when the United States was attempting to hold the line in all the Arab states which had not broken relations, "would have [a] most undesirable effect".²

On the morning of June 8, Porter reported that Prime Minister and Acting Foreign Minister Rashid Karame had called him in to inform him that Lebanon had decided to ask for Porter's recall in protest against U.S. policies and support of Israel. Lebanon wished to continue diplomatic relations but had to take some act of condemnation. Porter said he again denied U.S. military intervention, to which Karame replied that, regardless of the facts, all Arabs believed Israel existed only through the support of the United States. Karame said the Arabs would not accept Jordan's denial of U.S. involvement in the hostilities, for they would believe that Jordan was merely trying to preserve its existence by currying U.S. favor.

Porter urged Karame to support the cease-fire efforts before the situation got worse, but Karame saw no chance of a cease-fire. He said the fight would continue and that all Arab assets would be used. Porter replied that this would have nothing but catastrophic consequences, but Karame remained unconvinced. He urged that the United States take a public position as soon as possible which would show a shift to a policy other than all-out support of Israel--for example, a demand for withdrawal of Israeli forces behind the armistice lines.

¹From Beirut, tel. 11299, June 7, 1967, secret.

²To Beirut, tel. 208304, June 7, 1967, secret.

Porter stated that the British Ambassador had also been requested to leave Beirut. He did not think Lebanon would revise its decision in the near future, and he therefore planned to depart for Athens on the first available flight.¹

Four hours later, the American Chargé, Adrian T. Middleton, reported that, in the light of Karame's statement that there would be no cease-fire, the Lebanese Government might feel obligated to commit some forces in order to show Arab solidarity and avoid civil strife. As of June 6, President Helou had contemplated two "distasteful" military options: (1) a limited Lebanese attack across the border and (2) a joint Lebanese-Syrian initiative. The Lebanese feared that a Syrian military presence would threaten the present government, while action against Israel would bring against Lebanon a much superior army and air force.

Middleton stated that President Helou was aware of the consequences of military action and would try to stall as long as possible. If the cease-fire came soon, the problem presumably would disappear. If not, Lebanon might have to act. In this event, he suggested, the United States should try to moderate Israeli retaliation if the shooting started, for the Lebanese did not want war, and Israel had as much stake as the United States in keeping the internal balance in Lebanon for post-war stability.²

Developments Leading to the
Egyptian-Israeli Cease-Fire

During the first two days of the fighting on the Egyptian-Israeli front, the extent of progress of one side or the other proved difficult to determine. The Israelis were relatively tight-lipped; the Egyptian High Command issued a series of optimistic communiqués which Embassy Cairo interpreted with some suspicion. On June 6, President Nasser issued his charge that American and British planes had taken part in the initial attacks on Egyptian forces and airfields--a statement which appeared to be designed to prepare the Egyptian population for some bad news

¹From Beirut, tel. 11313, June 8, 1967, secret.

²From Beirut, tel. 11321, June 8, 1967, secret/exdis.

from the fighting front. At the end of the day, the Department of State sent out to its diplomatic posts its estimate that the Israelis seemed to be victorious, having finally seized the Gaza Strip after two days of heavy fighting (thereby eliminating the possibility of an Egyptian flank attack when the Israelis moved into Sinai) and having rendered the Egyptian Air Force "virtually ineffective".¹

Israel expressed willingness to accept the cease-fire resolution adopted by the U.N. Security Council on the evening of June 6. The Egyptian Government gave no indication of acceptance, apparently from reluctance to face the certainty of pending military disaster.

By June 7, the dimensions of Egypt's defeat began to register in Cairo. As of noon on that day, Ambassador Nolte reported that local Embassy employees had detected a feeling of bitterness among the people against Nasser and his regime. In particular, the pressmen at the Middle East News Agency were angered by what they considered Soviet betrayal "in Egypt's hour of need", and were reported as saying that, if the United States had in fact intervened on Israel's side, the U.A.R. should have counted on this. If the United States had not intervened then the U.A.R. had made a colossal error in judgement in calculating Israel's strength. "Everyone in Cairo" now knew that their government had suffered enormous losses in Sinai.

Charges against the United States continued to be repeated 18 hours a day on Cairo Radio and the morning papers had referred to the "American-British-Israeli attack" rather than the Israeli attack supported by the British and Americans. On the other hand, the Voice of America had only carried its regular news broadcasts with ineffective denials of the charges.²

At the end of the day of June 7, the Department reported to the field the complete collapse of resistance on the Egyptian front. The Israelis had advanced to within a few miles of the Suez Canal. Israeli forces had captured Sharm el-Sheikh, thereby seizing control of the Strait of Tiran.³

¹Circular tel. 208771, June 6, 1967, secret.

²From Cairo, tel. 8641, June 7, 1967, confidential.

³Circular tel. 209168, June 7, 1967, secret.

By June 8, the impact of the deteriorating U.A.R. military situation on the Egyptian population became an increasing cause for concern. The Department of State feared increased rioting and demonstrations, a serious breakdown of public order, and even the possibility of indiscriminate attacks against Europeans generally. The Department therefore suggested to Embassy Cairo that it consult with friendly embassies to get a broad international consensus concerning the question of protecting foreigners in Egypt. It felt this action might persuade the U.A.R. of the importance of maintaining "the usual norms of behavior in relations among states".¹

From Tel Aviv, on June 8, President Johnson's Special Representative, Harry McPherson, reported the view of the Israeli Defense Force Intelligence Director, General Aharon Yariv, that Israel's principal task had become one of exploiting its military success. Yariv had learned that, in spite of tremendous losses of Soviet materiel in Sinai, the U.S.S.R. still planned to ship equipment to the U.A.R. Information received indicated that planes might be coming from Czechoslovakia and that Algeria would give the U.A.R. about 50 planes, 15 or 20 of which had already arrived in Egypt. Yariv expressed the hope that political changes would soon come about in Egypt which would bring the hostilities to an end.²

As in the case of the cease-fire resolution of June 6, Egypt did not respond to the U.N. Security Council's second call for a cease-fire on June 7. The Council was therefore summoned into session again on June 8 to draw up yet a third request. Both the Soviet Union and the United States submitted draft resolutions calling for an immediate cease-fire. Reports from the U.S. Representative indicated that the Arabs were only slightly less unhappy with the U.S. proposal than was Israel with the Soviet draft. The Soviet draft condemned Israeli aggression, demanded a cease-fire, and called for withdrawal of Israeli troops behind the armistice lines. The main reason for Arab unhappiness with the U.S. draft resolution was that it did not suggest guidelines for negotiations concerning a long-term settlement. It also contained no mention of preserving the territorial integrity of all the states in the area. The objections of both sides became academic with receipt of word that the United Arab Republic had accepted a cease-fire as of 10:00 p.m. (EDT).³

¹Circular tel. 209293 to Ankara, Bern, Copenhagen, London, Madrid, Paris, Oslo, Rome, and Stockholm, June 8, 1967, secret.

²From Tel Aviv, tel. 4020, June 8, 1967, secret/exdis.

³From USUN, tel. 5659, June 8, 1967, confidential and tel. 5666, June 8, 1967, unclassified. For the text of the revised U.S. draft resolution of June 8, see the Department of State Bulletin, June 26, 1967, pp. 948-949.

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The Israeli Attack on the U.S.S. "Liberty"

At 8:30 (EDT) on the morning of June 8, the Department of State was informed of a torpedo attack on the U.S.S. Liberty, "an auxiliary ship", about 14 nautical miles north of the Egyptian coastline. Soon after the Department cabled the following report to the American Embassy in Moscow: The United States had instructed the carrier Saratoga, which was with the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean, to despatch eight aircraft to the scene of the damaged ship to investigate and to offer whatever protection might be necessary. The Department had then informed the Soviet Chargé, Yuri N. Tcherniakov, at 10:15 a.m. of the despatch of the American planes to the scene. At 11:00 a.m. (EDT), the Israelis had advised that they were responsible for hitting the Liberty through error and had apologized. The Department had telephoned this information to the Soviet Chargé at 11:01, and the U.S. planes had been called back to the carrier at 11:25 a.m.¹

Alarmed by this event, Ambassador Barbour reported from Tel Aviv that the Israelis were obviously shocked by the error. He urged that the United States avoid publicity if possible because, if the Liberty was a U.S. flag vessel, "its proximity to [the] scene [of the] conflict could feed Arab suspicions of U.S.-Israeli collusion".²

At 12:45 p.m., Deputy Under Secretary Kohler telephoned Tcherniakov again and left a message informing him that what he had told Tcherniakov earlier had been sent to Moscow via the "Hot Line". Kohler also said that the Department had received a reply from Chairman Kosygin acknowledging the receipt of the telegram and informing the United States that Russia had immediately passed the information to President Nasser.³

¹To Moscow, tel. 209218, June 8, 1967, confidential. Memorandum by Low (G) of conversation between Kohler (G) and Tcherniakov, June 8, 1967, secret.

²From Tel Aviv, tel. 4014, June 8, 1967, secret/exdis.

³Memorandum by Low (G) of conversation between Kohler (G) and a Counselor of the Soviet Embassy (not identified), June 8, 1967, secret.

From Cairo, Ambassador Nolte sent a sharply worded telegram stating "we had better get our story on [the] torpedoing of [the] U.S.S. Liberty out fast, and it had better be good".¹

Later in the afternoon of June 8, Deputy Under Secretary Kohler again telephoned the Soviet Embassy that he wanted to inform the Soviet Government that the press was expected to question Mr. Christian, Press Secretary to the President, closely at his 4:00 p.m. briefing concerning whether the "Hot Line" had been used during the crisis, especially since de Gaulle had announced his use of it. Kohler said that Christian would say that the President had had exchanges with Chairman Kosygin in many ways, using various channels, including the "Hot Line". Christian, Kohler said, would point out that the "Hot Line" was a telegraphic rather than a voice communication.²

On the same day, Israeli Ambassador Harman wrote a letter of apology and condolences to Secretary Rusk, while Foreign Minister Eban telegraphed the Israeli Government's regret and sent "deep and respectful" condolences to the families of the dead and injured.³

¹From Cairo, tel. 8705, June 8, 1967, secret/exdis.

²Memorandum by Low (G) of conversation between Kohler (G) and Vorontsov, June 8, 1967, secret.

³Letter from Harman to Rusk, June 8, 1967; telegram from Eban to Rusk, June 8, 1967. On June 10, the Israeli Embassy sent a note to Rusk renewing Israel's expression of regret and offering compensation (letter from Harman to Rusk, June 10, 1967).

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Developments Leading to the Syrian-Israeli
Cease-Fire

During the hostilities on the Israeli-Egyptian and Israeli-Jordanian fronts, military action between Israel and Syria had generally been mutually defensive, except for continued Syrian shelling of some Israeli border communities. With the wind-up of its western and eastern campaigns, Israel proceeded, on June 8, to concentrate its attacking forces against Syria in an effort to destroy the gun positions on the Syrian border. This action was taken despite the U.N. Security Council cease-fire resolutions of June 6 and 7, both of which Israel had accepted, while Syria had not.

At 5:24 a.m. Eastern daylight time (10:00 a.m. Israeli time), the Department of State received word from the American Consul in Jerusalem indicating that the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization had reported that the Israelis had just launched an intensive air and artillery bombardment of Syrian positions opposite the Central Demilitarized Zone as an apparent prelude to a large-scale attack in order to seize the Syrian heights overlooking Israeli border settlements.¹

The Department immediately cabled Embassy Tel Aviv that the UNTSO report was "deeply disturbing" and instructed Ambassador Barbour to approach the Foreign Office at the "highest" level to express deep concern at this new military action. If the report was correct, the Department assumed it was a prelude to an attack on Syria itself. This development, following Israeli acceptance of the U.N. Security Council cease-fire resolutions, would cast doubt on Israeli intentions and create the gravest problem for U.S. Government representatives in Arab countries. The Department instructed Barbour to stress the necessity of the United States' having, "at all costs", complete cessation of Israeli military action except when firing was necessary in self-defense.²

On June 9, however, Ambassador Barbour reported from Tel Aviv that, after a period of quiet, the Syrians had opened

¹From Jerusalem, tel. 1053, June 8, 1967, confidential.

²To Tel Aviv, tel. 209182, June 8, 1967, secret.

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fire again on Israeli border settlements and that Israeli forces were taking action to silence the Syrian guns.¹ Having belatedly accepted the U.N. Security Council resolutions of June 6 and 7, Syria requested an urgent meeting of the Council. This body unanimously adopted a third resolution which demanded "that hostilities should cease forthwith" and requested "the Secretary-General to make immediate contacts with the Governments of Israel and Syria to arrange immediate compliance ... and to report to the Security Council not later than two hours from now."² At approximately 3:30 p.m. (EDT) both Syria and Israel accepted the June 9 Security Council cease-fire resolution, Israel adding in its acceptance statement, "provided that Syria accepts it and will implement the cease-fire".³

Barbour reported from Tel Aviv, however, that the fighting on the Syrian front was still continuing. He commented that it was obviously taking longer than had been anticipated by the Israelis to complete the action against Syria, which was to knock out the Syrian gun emplacements overlooking the Israeli settlements on the border.⁴

Because of the continuation of the fighting, Secretary Rusk himself cabled Ambassador Barbour, instructing him to see Foreign Minister Eban as soon as possible. He told Barbour to tell Eban that he regarded the standing of Israel at the United Nations as "deteriorating rapidly" because of a general impression that Israel was not fully behind the Security Council effort to obtain a cease-fire. Rusk said that Eban knew that the United States fully supported the Security Council resolutions and considered it very important that Israel demonstrate by its actions that it meant what it said. If the cease-fire on the Syrian front was not effective immediately, Rusk stated, there was likely to be broad support in the Security Council for condemnation of Israel. Rusk also

¹From Tel Aviv, tel. 4026, June 9, 1967, secret/exdis.

²U.S. Participation in the UN: Report by the President to the Congress for the Year 1967, pp. 35-36.

³From USUN, tel. 5676, June 9, 1967, unclassified.

⁴From Tel Aviv, tel. 4039, June 9, 1967, secret/exdis.

instructed Barbour to inform Eban that he had met with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, where there was strong feeling about the incomprehensible attack on the U.S.S. Liberty. A U.S. note on the subject would be sent later.¹

Early in the morning of June 10, Ambassador Barbour cabled the Department that the Israeli Government was informing its Embassy in Washington and its U.N. Delegation that there was absolutely no foundation to Syrian charges that Israel intended to advance to Damascus. Israel was trying to silence the guns bombarding its settlements and was prepared to implement the cease-fire immediately to the present line. The Israelis were in touch with General Bull and had asked him to send observers to the Syrian front, and Prime Minister Eshkol had gone to the front to insure that Israeli action was limited to "response".

Barbour reported that the Israelis had reluctantly decided that they had to accept implementation of the cease-fire on the existing line despite the fact that such a settlement would not provide future protection for the Israeli border communities. This decision had been made on the basis of the deteriorating situation in the Security Council and the obvious urgency of implementing the cease-fire.²

Shortly after the receipt of this telegram, the Department cabled Tel Aviv and Jerusalem that the Security Council situation was "deteriorating rapidly". The Department stated that Barbour's report of Israeli action as limited to silencing the guns bombarding settlements conflicted with a message from Jerusalem which reported that Qunetra had fallen and that Damascus was under air attack and the city might fall. The Department requested comment from both Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.³

Meanwhile, Under Secretary Katzenbach called in Israeli Ambassador Harman at 10 a.m. on June 10. At this meeting, also attended by Under Secretary Rostow, Assistant Secretary Battle,

¹To Tel Aviv, tel. 209964, June 9, 1967, confidential/nodis.

²From Tel Aviv, tel. 4049, June 10, 1967, confidential.

³To Tel Aviv, to. Jerusalem, tel. 210017, June 10, 1967, confidential.

and Israeli Minister Evron, Katzenbach told Harman that an effective cease-fire along the Israeli-Syrian sector had to be reached without delay. He stated that the Secretary had sent a message to this effect to Foreign Minister Eban the preceding evening. Katzenbach said he appreciated Israeli difficulties, but reports from Ambassador Goldberg indicated that the Soviet Union was taking advantage of the situation and was "busy saber rattling". He inquired whether an earlier report from the Government of Israel that the fighting had ceased was correct. The United States had passed on this information to the Russians; if it was not correct, U.S. credibility with the Russians would suffer.

Harman stated he understood the importance of Katzenbach's remarks. He said he wanted to make clear that there was no invasion of Syria or a move on Damascus intended. The Syrians had reluctantly agreed to the cease-fire but had then engaged in a wholesale destruction of the Israeli side of the line. Israel had tried to prevent a recurrence of this by occupying the high points. Concurrently, the Israeli Defense Minister, General Moshe Dayan, had requested General Bull to help take effective steps for a cease-fire.

Katzenbach said again that he understood the Israeli problem, but he urged that there be no delay in obtaining a cease-fire. As long as the firing did not cease, the weight of the assumption was that the Israelis were responsible. Reactions from "the Hill" indicated that Congress "had had its full of the failure to stop the fighting".

Ambassador Harman said that he prayed that the shooting would end, but he asked what should be done if the Syrians continued fighting. Both Katzenbach and Rostow said it was important to have the U.N. personnel find out what was going on. Evron observed, however, that the Syrians were not allowing U.N. observers on their side of the line.¹

¹Memorandum by Gamon (NEA/ARN) of conversation among Katzenbach (U), Rostow (M), and Battle (NEA) and Ambassador Harman and Minister Evron, June 10, 1967, secret.

At 12:15 p.m., Ambassador Harman phoned Deputy Assistant Secretary Davies that General Dayan had met with General Bull to discuss an arrangement for the implementation of the Security Council resolution. Dayan had stressed that what was being discussed was not an arrangement within the framework of the Syrian-Israeli Armistice Agreement of 1949. He also had emphasized that the arrangement had to be reciprocal. Bull had agreed and was engaged in sending two Chief Observers, one on either side of the line, to establish communication with each other. Harman stated that the U.N. Secretary-General had been informed of this by General Bull.¹

Shortly after, Harman phoned the Department to say that he had just been informed by the Israeli Foreign Office that at 1730 hours Israeli time, Bull had informed the Israelis that the Syrians had agreed to a cease-fire beginning at 1830 hours.² From Tel Aviv, Barbour reported the same information, i.e., that General Bull had received a reply from the Syrians proposing 1830 local time as the time for a cease-fire.³

Later in the day, Ambassador Barbour sent to the Department his estimate as to why the Israelis had finally agreed to complete the cease-fire with Syria. It was his view that the Soviet statement in the U.N. Security Council on June 9 threatening dire consequences if Israel did not end the war (and Barbour reported that he had been preaching the "criticality [of the] Soviet factor since 1645 hours this morning when I saw Eban") and the Soviet break in diplomatic relations with Israel on the morning of the 10th had not caused as much concern to the Government of Israel as perhaps they should have. Barbour said the severance of relations was probably the minimum card the Soviets had to play sometime to satisfy Arab resentment against them. He believed it was rather the deteriorating Security Council situation, the "clear signal" of U.S. anxieties, and the essentiality of extricating themselves from overextension

¹Message from Ambassador Harman, June 10, 1967, secret.

²Message from Ambassador Harman, June 10, 1967, secret.

³From Tel Aviv, tel. 4058, June 10, 1967, unclassified.

in Syria, particularly when accused by the Syrians of advancing on Damascus, which convinced the Israelis that implementation of the cease-fire under any available machinery was of top priority.

Barbour concluded that it seemed clear that, driven by the military necessity of achieving a viable military posture for the protection of border settlements, the "Israelis played for time in political maneuvers in [the] Security Council to [a] hair-raising proximity to [the] brink". He said it was also evident that they thought they had got away with it. There was a generally relaxed atmosphere in official circles and every indication of an intention to hold to the cease-fire.¹

¹From Tel Aviv, tel. 4063, June 10, 1967, secret/exdis.

Planning for a Broad Settlement of the
Problems of the Middle East

Early in the Arab-Israeli hostilities, the United States indicated its interest in planning for a broad Middle East settlement following a cease-fire. The White House statement of June 5 pledged "a new beginning of programs to assure the peace and development of the entire area." President Johnson issued a statement on June 7 in which he declared that, with the U.N. Security Council call for a cease-fire in the Middle East, there was "now a real chance for all to turn from the frustrations of the past to the hopes of a peaceful future." The President acknowledged that "the first responsibility falls to the peoples and governments in the area," but he added that the United States had to do its best to that end, "both inside and outside the United Nations." He pointed out that "the effort to help build a new peace will require the most careful coordination of the work of our Government." To this end, he announced he had created a Special Committee of the National Security Council, with the Secretary of State as presiding officer and McGeorge Bundy, former Special Assistant to the President, as Executive Secretary, to undertake this coordination and planning.¹

The President's June 7 announcement was matched by a communication from Ambassador Henry J. Tasca in Rabat, who informed the Department that the Moroccan Foreign Minister, Ahmed Laraki, had expressed the wish of his Government to search out the causes of the Arab-Israeli problem in order to find a solution and prevent another outbreak in four or five years with even more destructive weapons.² Tasca reported, further, that the Moroccan Government wanted to have U.S. views on the possible components of a package proposal for a long-range solution. Tasca also stated that the Moroccan objective was to try to organize the moderate Arab leaders along a course independent of Nasser to the extent necessary in solving the problem. The King had been considering calling an Arab summit meeting for these purposes.³

¹Department of State Bulletin, June 26, 1967, p. 951.

²From Rabat, tel. 5413, June 7, 1967, confidential.

³From Rabat, tel. 5419, June 7, 1967, secret.

On the evening of June 8, Ambassador Tasca informed the Department that the King had requested him to pass on only to the President and Secretary of State the information that President Nasser and other Arab leaders were considering asking Prime Minister Houari Boumedienne of Algeria to go to Paris and Moscow and King Hassan to go to Washington to discuss the next steps in the Arab-Israeli crisis. The purpose of the visits would be to determine whether the United States and the U.S.S.R. were serious about seeking a solution to the Arab-Israeli problem. Ambassador Tasca had pointed out to Hassan that the President had established a Cabinet committee headed by McGeorge Bundy to work on the problem. The King stated that this step showed U.S. seriousness, and he added that he himself was interested in a settlement of the refugee problem. Tasca had asked the King whether Nasser's proposal meant that Egypt and other Arab states would accept a cease-fire, to which the King answered that the visits would make no sense unless there were one. The King made it known that he had not decided whether to accept the mission to Washington and that he would not accept it unless he could report to other Arab leaders encouragement from the United States. Failure of his mission could be detrimental to Moroccan-American relations.¹

On the following day, Secretary Rusk instructed Ambassador Tasca to tell King Hassan that the President and he deeply appreciated the King's willingness to play a constructive role in connection with the next phase of the Arab-Israeli crisis and attached great importance to his advice and interest. Both of them shared the King's concern, however, about the timing of his proposed visit in terms of the prospects for its success. While the U.S. Government desired a constructive solution to Middle East problems as quickly as possible, a number of questions remained unanswered. Among them were the U.A.R.'s intentions and tactics and whether it sincerely desired to work out a realistic solution. Related to this was the problem of how authentic a spokesman the U.A.R. leaders remained for the Arabs and the extent to which the King's mission would have general support. The choice of Boumedienne as an emissary to Paris and Moscow caused the United States to question whether Nasser's real motivations

¹From Rabat, tel. 5439, June 8, 1967, top secret.

were to achieve a realistic settlement or merely to buy time in the "hope of reestablishing [the] disastrous type of leadership which he has given the Arab world."

The Secretary also expressed concern about the possible consequences of these uncertainties for the King's own personal position. While the United States was anxious to make every effort to achieve genuine peace in the area, it had not yet been able finally to develop its own ideas. The United States welcomed the King's thoughts, but, unless there were a reasonably wide consensus "among constructively minded Arab states," the United States doubted that a visit at that time would achieve much of a substantive nature. In fact, it might prove detrimental to the King's relations with the rest of the Arab world and to his image in the United States.

The Secretary emphasized that the United States needed the King's advice, and that arranging a visit depended only on timing and assuring conditions which would maximize its success. He expressed the hope that the King could help mobilize constructive Arab support for steps to be taken toward peace, including the possibility of resolving the refugee problem, and stated that the President and he would be glad to explore the possibilities of a visit at an early opportunity.¹

While temporarily setting aside the Moroccan initiative respecting post-war planning for the Middle East until more favorable circumstances prevailed, the United States approached Iran on this matter. Late in the evening of June 8, the Department cabled a message from the President to the Shah in which the President expressed regret that the Shah and the Empress had been unable to come to Washington and the hope that it would be possible to meet soon to discuss "our mutual concerns, especially in the Middle East." The President assured the Shah that he, too, desired to continue a close exchange of views, as the Shah had indicated to Ambassador Harriman in Paris. He added that he had just learned that the U.A.R. and Israel had accepted a cease-fire

¹To Rabat, tel. 209982, June 9, 1967, top secret (nodis).

and said that he would welcome the Shah's thoughts on how to proceed to bring stable peace, prosperity, and regional cooperation to the Middle East.¹

On June 10, the Chargé in Tehran, Nicholas G. Thacher, informed the Department of the Shah's interest in helping to resolve the crisis. Thacher stated that he had been told by the Iranian Foreign Ministry that, because of the postponement of the Shah's visit to the United States, the Shah had decided to propose either that the United States send a special emissary to Iran or that Iran send someone to Washington.²

The Department replied to Embassy Tehran that it seemed premature for the United States to send an emissary while plans were still being formulated. On the other hand, if Iran wished to send a special representative, the United States would be happy to receive him for discussions, provided no publicity was given the mission. The Department told the Embassy that the Iranian Ambassador had agreed to suggest to his Government that a decision to send a representative be postponed for a few days.³

In Washington, however, Iranian Ambassador Ansary received separate briefings on June 9 and 10 from Under Secretary Rostow, Assistant Secretary Battle, and Deputy Assistant Secretary Rockwell, in the course of which Ansary attempted to discover U.S. plans for the future of the Middle East after the end of hostilities. In the June 9 briefing, Ansary questioned Rostow about Soviet and U.S. arms shipments. Rostow indicated that Soviet intentions could in part be gauged by whether they resupplied the Arabs with arms, and the United States was watching Soviet actions carefully. He stressed three major U.S. concerns: (1) long-term relations with Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and other Middle Eastern states; (2) rebuttal of U.A.R. charges of U.S. involvement in the war; and (3) keeping the oil situation from worsening.

¹To Tehran, tel. 209548, June 8, 1967, secret/exdis.

²From Tehran, tel. 4900, June 10, 1967, secret/exdis.

³To Tehran, tel. 210152, June 10, 1967, secret/exdis.

Ansary said that the Shah felt the Israelis should restrain their post-war expectations, although recognition of Israel as a state and the refugee problem must be faced. Rostow observed that the Shah could make a useful point to the Israelis that it would be a mistake to drive the Arab population from the West Bank.¹

On June 10, Assistant Secretary Battle informed Ansary that the problems of the area were under intensive study, but that the United States had reached no firm conclusions. The United States would welcome Iran's views and hoped that Iran could play a useful role in this respect. Ansary told Battle he had decided to postpone his visit to Tehran until he had a clearer picture of U.S. plans. Battle mentioned a number of uncertainties. For example, the fate of Nasser with the attitude of the U.A.R. Army unknown, the tremendous economic problems, and the attitude of the Soviet Union toward assisting Egypt. The Soviet Union would undoubtedly attempt to rebuild its influence in the area, probably broadening its base. Battle said further that, in any event, Egypt's economic problems would have to be faced. Another unknown was the fate of Hussein and Jordan.

Ansary stated that a major problem was the credence given in the Arab world to charges that the United States had assisted Israel militarily. Battle agreed that rebuttal of the charges would be very difficult. Ansary asked if the United States had decided to take a conciliatory attitude toward Nasser. Battle replied that, with the break in relations, Nasser's charges, and the Congressional attitude, conciliation at that time was most unlikely. Chances of a change would depend on the United Arab Republic.²

¹This step was promptly taken by the Iranian Government; see to Tehran, tel. 210153, June 10, 1967, secret/exdis.

²To Tehran, tel. 210119, June 10, 1967, secret/exdis.

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2. The Jordan Waters Issue

a. Background

A major point of US involvement in the Middle East as the Johnson Administration assumed office resulted from efforts of previous administrations to support a unified plan for the development of the Jordan Valley, a focus of Arab-Israeli conflict.

President Eisenhower had sent Ambassador Eric Johnston to the area in 1954, and the latter spent several years endeavoring to develop a unified water plan acceptable to the various riparian states.

While Johnston managed to develop a substantial measure of agreement, the riparian states did not accept his proposal as last formulated in late 1955, and indeed some uncertainty existed with respect to some of its elements. Johnston negotiated separately with both sides, and his papers remained classified, so the respective riparians were not privy to details of his negotiations with the other. Among specific points which were unresolved at the time his mission terminated

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in late 1955 were the division of Yarmuk River water in the Adasiya area, the division of high saline content water, and the role of a watermaster. Due in part to the way the negotiation had evolved, plus the circumstance that the negotiation was never completed, there was uncertainty by 1963 as to which of several drafts in the Johnston papers should be taken as "the Johnston Plan", later referred to as the "Unified Plan". The last official formulation prepared by Johnston, and therefore presumed to contain his position at the time negotiations broke off, was one he had submitted to the Arab Foreign Ministers on September 30, 1955.

Despite these questions regarding the status of Johnston's proposal, the "Johnston Plan" came to have a positive status in American thinking which carried over into the Administration of President Johnson. In an effort to maintain momentum toward eventual acceptance of the Plan, the United States had indicated that it would consider worthy of support individual water projects of the various riparians which were "consistent" with the Plan. On January 2, 1964, President Johnson addressed

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a letter to Israeli Prime Minister Eshkol which stated, inter alia,

Among the major problems which we will have to consider in the near future is that of the Jordan waters, on which we stand behind you in your rights of withdrawal in accordance with the Unified Plan.

It was clear that Israel placed great stress on continued US support for Israeli water projects, and in a real sense the Johnston effort necessitated a US interest in the Jordan water problem in view of Israeli action in proceeding with certain projects, in particular one involving diversion of a significant quantity of water from Lake Tiberias outside of the Jordan Valley Basin. The Arab States, which had not accepted the Plan as a political matter, contested the right asserted by Israel to carry out the project.

The United States also sought during the period in question to cooperate with the Government of Jordan in projects considered "consistent with the Unified Plan". Specifically, this took the form of assistance in development of the East

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Ghor canal system.

b. Revived US Interest in Plan

Early in 1964, in an effort to resolve the unagreed portions of the Unified Plan, discussions took place with Israeli officials in an effort to clarify the respective positions.^{1/} In the course of the meeting "the United States conveyed to Israel the fact of the existence as well as the text of the US-Arab Memorandum of Understanding of October 11, 1955. The United States informed Israel that this Memorandum represents the US position on disputed points." (Subsequently it was ascertained that the October 11, 1955, paper was a purely internal Johnston-delegation document -- it had not been given to the Arabs and was not a "US-Arab Memorandum of Understanding". The document given to the Arabs was the September 30, 1955 memorandum.)

^{1/} Memoranda of Conversation between Israeli Embassy and Department of State officials, January 7-9 and 16, 1964 (~~SECRET~~).

As a result of the January 1964 talks it was clear that differences existed with regard to certain aspects of "the Plan". However, it was agreed that the United States would propose to the Arab States a "formula" designed to clarify the division of saline and Yarmuk water. This technical-formula approach, however, proved to be unacceptable to the Arab States.

c. Israeli Diversion and Arab Counter-Diversion Plan

Israel began diverting water from Tiberias in May 1964. While the Arab States continued to protest that the diversion was a violation of international water law, the issue became only one of the numerous issues of contention between the Arab States and Israel, with the Arabs focusing on the possibility of blocking the diversion. At an Arab summit conference in Alexandria in early September 1964 it was decided to proceed with a counter-strategy involving diverting the headwaters of the Jordan through Syria and into Jordan.

The announcement of the Arab Diversion Plan ushered in a period of rising tensions marked by reports of some progress on

the Arab side and of presumed intentions of the Israelis to prevent completion of the counter-diversion project. The Arab plan was implemented to the point where construction work was commenced in Syria, and to a certain extent in Lebanon; and the project was viewed by Israel with greatest concern. Representations of the strongest nature were continually made to the United States to oppose the Arab project.^{2/}

d. Disposition of Saline Water

In addition to the diversion issue, a new problem began to develop during the fall of 1964 as a result of Israeli plans to capture saline springs in the Lake Tiberias area and to channel the saline effluent into the lower Jordan. Israeli officials considered that such action was envisaged in the Johnston Plan, although the United States did not find that the Johnston proposal had clarified what disposition of the saline springs was considered appropriate. The Israelis completed preparations and begun releasing the saline effluent

^{2/} Cf. Department of State Circular Airgram CA-8347, to Amman, Beirut, etc., February 17, 1966 (~~CONFIDENTIAL~~).

in October 1964 masking it with an increased outlet of Tiberias water. Whether due to this masking or to the development of more immediate problems, the discharge did not result in challenge by Jordan.

e. Status of Plan

In a January 11, 1965, press conference, Israeli Prime Minister Eshkol said "there are commitments in the world toward us, in the wake of the Johnston Plan. The accomplished fact, which was laid down by Johnston, created a certain situation." On May 17, he was quoted as stating that the Johnston Plan was "regarded as agreed from an international point of view." The Department of State prepared (but did not use) contingency press guidance giving its current position as follows:

...We have never regarded the Johnston Plan as an international agreement. Neither Israel nor the Arab States gave formal agreement to it. In our policy, we regard it simply as a yardstick, a standard for the most efficient and equitable development of the waters of the Jordan Valley.

f. Tension and Hostilities

On February 10, 1965, the State Department indicated to the Israeli Embassy that it "would be difficult to justify any preemptive strike against the Arab diversion project unless Israeli basic water interests are affected and all other recourses exhausted."

On February 27, the Department transmitted a message stating: "We conclude that unless there is some sudden and entirely unexpected collapse Arab resolve in this matter or most forceful outside peace making initiative, there is very real possibility Israel will undertake military action designed to check Arab efforts." The message proposed taking the matter to the Security Council, seeking a resolution which would: "1) call for peaceful solution of the dispute; 2) call for suspension by both sides of work on diversionary installations; 3) request ICJ advisory opinion on legal aspects of international river in this case; and 4) call upon the SYG to establish a three nation impartial committee to study on

a technical basis the water usage plan of the riparian states and to submit recommendations for peaceful settlement of any conflicts between these plans."^{3/}

On March 2, our Tel Aviv Embassy replied: "At present stage of discussion with Israel I can say immediately that script proposed Deptel 838 for reference problem to the UN would be entirely unacceptable to Israel." Similarly, the Embassy in Amman replied: "We believe resolution outlined in reftel has no chance acceptance by Arabs..."^{4/} Embassies in other Arab capitals also reported uncertainty regarding the acceptability of the proposal.

On March 17, 1965, a heavy exchange of artillery and tank fire occurred along the Israel-Syrian frontier. During the course of this exchange the diversion project in Syria came under fire resulting in the destruction of two tractors and two bulldozers. On May 13, 1965, another incident involving

^{3/} Department of State Circular Telegram 838 to Tel Aviv et al., February 27, 1965. ~~(SECRET)~~.

^{4/} From Tel Aviv, Telegram 1088, March 2, 1965 (SECRET); from Amman, Telegram 509, March 2, 1965 (SECRET).

the diversion project occurred when Israeli artillery fired across the Syrian frontier at construction equipment. The Department informed the field: "All reports we have received indicate Israeli forces primed for action in central DZ prior commencement firing, that Israelis fired first and Syrians did not return fire. We reiterate our opposition to use force Arab diversion project."^{5/}

Subsequently, the issue of the Arab diversion diminished in importance. The project was not dropped but the view was accepted by the Arab States that it must be deferred until they were in a military position to protect the construction workers and equipment, and accordingly the matter receded in importance. Similarly, as the Arab-Israeli confrontation expanded into broader areas, the water issue was overtaken by events and the US involvement in this particular matter became less starkly outlined. At the end of the Johnson Administration the Jordan water problem was not a major element in the overall Middle Eastern picture.

^{5/} Department of State Telegram 1181 to Tel Aviv, May 18, 1965 ~~(CONFIDENTIAL)~~.