



BRITISH LEGATION,  
BAGDAD,  
IRAQ.

SECRET

MA/33/A/3

JE 11211/451

September 5, 1956.

Dear Michael.

You may be interested to have the enclosed copy of a minute by the Military Attaché regarding a conversation with the Chief of General Staff on the Suez Canal and the situation in the Middle East in general.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the Chanceries in Cairo, Damascus and Amman.

Yours ever,  
R.W.J.

E.M. Rose, Esq., C.M.G.,  
Levant Department,  
Foreign Office, S.W.1.

(R.W.J. Hooper)

1	2	cms	PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE	ins	1	1	2
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SECRET

THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

On the 1st September, I raised with the C.G.S. the question of Egypt. I said that we had not discussed this subject together since the beginning of the month, that I had seen in to-day's paper that a meeting between the West and Egypt was going to be held on Monday and that I wondered what were his reactions. He started a little charily, but then began to talk. He said that, in his opinion, it was not a question of the Suez Canal any more, but a battle for power between Russia, India and Egypt and the West to destroy British prestige in the Middle East. If the Suez Canal situation was settled, then there would only be something else to follow.

2. I then asked whether he thought that Nasser would lose sufficient face as a result of any solution that might arise at this meeting. This, he considered, would not be the case. Nasser, in the eyes of the public, was definitely becoming more and more of a hero. Western policy was inclined to be weak - particularly the Americans, who were too kind. He then discussed the Americans. He described "Byroad", who he said was a West Point man, chosen to talk with the Egyptians on a military to military basis. He had strongly advised against Byroad. He mentioned Eveland, who he said was now a big man in Damascus. On my query, he confirmed that this was an Assistant Military Attache in Iraq. (He was here until September 1952, and, if I remember rightly, was not pro-British) He said that the younger American generation was emotional and its opinions biased its judgement.

3. I then got him back to Iraq and asked whether he thought this hero-worshipping of Nasser applied to the Iraqis. He confirmed that it did to the man in the street and said that the feeling was genuine. I asked if it applied to the Army and he said that the Army was different in that it was more disciplined. Down to Brigade Command and Battalion Command level, though emotionally there might be one opinion, reason confirmed the line that should be taken. Below that level, he thought the situation might be different. This feeling for Nasser would gradually seep up the higher ranks if the situation did not change. However, he was not worried about the Army, because in two or three weeks he would have them running about on exercises and when that happened they forgot about these things.

4. I then asked how he thought the situation affected our friends the Jordanians. He said that there was a split between the King and Ali Abu Nuwar. On my querying this he said that they had had signs of it. He then said the King is mad and repeated this. Ali Abu Nuwar was also mad, but it was a different kind of madness; he was playing with both sides. After he had had a few whiskies, he had told the Delegation which recently visited Jordan that what he wanted from the Arab States - and this was including Iraq - was money. This blatant expression of Nuwar's views had obviously impressed the C.G.S. very unfavourably. He said that if the present situation in Suez was settled in the right way (I inferred that if the British took a firm policy line), then Jordan would make overtures to us. He then said that if we put in one battalion at Aqaba and a little pressure from the Iraqis, and Jordan would be finished. Then, the Suez situation having been cleared up, Syria could be dealt with.

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JE 1421/1453

J  
L. J. J.

SUEZ CANAL COMPANY

Monsieur Georges-Picot is to see the Secretary of State this morning. He will no doubt say what instructions he intends to propose that the Company should send to their non-Egyptian staff after the meetings of the Management Committee on Monday and of the Board on Tuesday. These will presumably involve the cessation of work by non-Egyptian staff not later than Saturday next (September 15).

2. The Secretary of State will wish to inform Monsieur Georges-Picot of H.M. Government's agreement that there should be no further appeals to the British staff to remain at work against their will.

3. On the other hand we do not wish the Canal to become unusable. The diversion of a certain amount of shipping round the Cape may be acceptable for a time, but we wish to keep the figures of British tonnage transitting the Canal as high as possible. And we intend our ships to continue to go through in disregard of the new Egyptian authority.

4. We have therefore been considering whether any means could be devised for enlisting the help of the Company's British pilots after they had left Egypt.

Would it be practicable, for instance, to send convoys of British ships through in both directions?

Can the same pilot handle a ship throughout its transit?

How close to the Canal would the pilots have to be based?

What volume of shipping could be handled in this way?

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5. In answering these questions Monsieur Georges-Picot may raise others. In particular:

- (a) Whether it is our idea that the pilots would be working under the control of the Company.
- (b) Whether we intend to include any shipping of other friendly powers (other than France, who has more pilots than we have) in the new system.

6. To some extent these two questions are interdependent. I suggest the answers are roughly: that we are of course concerned with the freedom of all shipping to use the Canal; but that we are faced with an emergency in which we may have to improvise purely British action for a time; and that it would be inappropriate for the Company as such to be involved in this. We have certainly assumed hitherto that the Company should not play any part in the new international arrangements; and to give it a new lease of life now would almost certainly conflict with the plans we hope to make in the near future for the payment of dues.

*H. Beeley*

(H. Beeley)  
September 8, 1956

*n*

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110

Enter J

JE14211/1454

Suez Canal

The Italian Minister called on me this morning to see, as he put it, whether I had any information to give him.

2. I gave Signor Prunas a general indication of what we had heard from Mr. Menzies. I made it clear that so far I had seen no confirmation of press reports regarding an Egyptian counter proposal, though it seemed to me only too likely that Nasser would counter with something like the Indian resolution. I had seen no account as yet of Mr. Menzies' reported conversation with the diplomatic representatives of the 17 other Powers in Cairo.

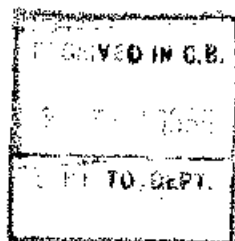
JE14211/1340

3. I also told Signor Prunas in general terms about yesterday's meeting of the North Atlantic Council. Signor Prunas tried to draw me on the question of the Security Council and on economic measures. I confined myself to saying that the Secretary of State had referred to both possibilities yesterday. After mentioning that I was glad to have had a few words with Signor Alessandrini in Paris, I drew Signor Prunas' attention to Rome telegram No. 603 of September 5. I said that coming on top of Signor Martino's unqualified support for the U.S. proposals this statement of Italian policy gave us the greatest satisfaction. Speaking strictly for myself, I added that I was relieved to see that Italy's attitude was clear-cut and was not based on the belief that she could and should somehow keep a private line open to Cairo.

4. Speaking of the general situation in the Middle East, Signor Prunas said that when Nasser had been eliminated the Italian Government would wish to help Egypt and, indeed,

/other

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other countries in the area to the best of her ability. Massive aid would be needed. I replied that I quite understood this and thought that H.M. G. would wish Italy to play a part in any efforts to help countries of the Middle East. We were in the same boat. We might go under for a short while but we would ride out the storm together and come in on the crest of the wave.

*A. D. M. Ross*

(A. D. M. Ross)  
September 6, 1956.

Copies to:-

Mr. Reilly  
Sir J. Ward  
Southern Department  
African Department

Subsequently on the Secretary of State's instructions I telephoned to Signor Prunas saying that I was authorised to repeat to him officially as from Mr. Selwyn Lloyd the statement which I had made this morning. I then repeated the sentence which I have sidelined.

*A. D. M. Ross*

(A. D. M. Ross)  
September 6, 1956.

*Jk*  
7.9

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FROM FOREIGN OFFICE TO CAIRO

Cypher/OTP and By Bag.

FOREIGN OFFICE AND  
WHITEHALL DISTRIBUTION

No: 2658  
September 2, 1956.

D: 1.02 p.m. September 2, 1956.

IMMEDIATE  
CONFIDENTIAL

Addressed to Cairo telegram No: 2658 of September 2  
Repeated for information to: Washington [Priority].  
and Saving to: Paris No: 3089.

SUEZ CANAL.

Mr. Menzies held a meeting of representatives of the 18 powers last night, in order to explain the procedure which he would follow in Cairo. France and Ethiopia did not send representatives.

2. Mr. Menzies said his first task would be to fix a timetable with Fawzi. He did not intend to become engaged in long-drawn out discussions, but he hinted that the talks might perhaps last a week. He intended after the first meeting to hand Nasser a short aide-memoire in order to explain the spirit in which the Commission were entering on the negotiations. Once the Commission had put its case fully to Nasser, he would hand him a further aide-memoire, setting out the Commission's views in detail. The Commission would thus be in a position to refute any subsequent misrepresentations. He hoped to have private talks with Nasser, at which he could put things more frankly than in a full meeting.

3. He intended to stress to Nasser the depth of feeling which had been aroused by this question and the extremely serious decision which Nasser would be making if he rejected the Commission's proposals.

4. He hoped that it would be possible to avoid giving publicity to the details of the discussions, but the Commission would be bound to publish their version if the Egyptians published.

5. In reply to a question, Mr. Menzies made it clear that his breaking point would be on the principle of international management and control.

JJJJJ

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GHAR EL-YOM

September 8, 1956.

This is the real situation between the Menzies Committee  
and Egypt

Mohammed Hassanein Heikal's Investigations

Has the Menzies Committee Failed?

This is the question in which informed circles in Cairo shared concern after the news reiterated in London, Paris and Cairo yesterday about the failure of the Menzies Committee in its mission in Egypt.

In the opinion of these informed circles, those who talk about the success or failure of the Menzies Committee in fact go beyond the limits of the mission entrusted to this Committee and thrust upon it powers which the Committee did not claim for itself at any time.

In fact the mission for which the Menzies Committee came to Egypt is very clear in Menzies' letter in which he asked in the name of the Committee to meet President Gamal Abdel Nasser. It is also quite clear in the President's reply to this request.

Menzies said word for word: "The Committee on which I have the honour to preside has asked me to communicate to you its desire to meet you to present and explain to you the viewpoint of the Governments which appointed it concerning the Suez Canal question. The Committee would like to know urgently whether you agree to meet it for this purpose".

President Gamal Abdel Nasser, in his reply to the Committee, used the same words which Menzies used in his letter to him .... The President said word for word: "I beg to inform you that I have received your message in which you inform me of the desire of the Committee presided over by you to meet me, to present and explain the viewpoint of the Governments mentioned in your message concerning the Suez Canal question. I agree to the Committee's request to meet me".

These are the limits drawn up for the Menzies Committee. To present and explain to the President of the Egyptian Republic. In the nature of these limits, there can be no question of the success or failure of the Committee.

The question is:

Has the Committee performed its mission or not, whether because it could not explain its viewpoint, or because it did not have the opportunity to explain it?

The answer to this question is:

The Committee has performed its mission. It presented the viewpoint of the Governments which delegated it and explained it. It was given every opportunity to say all it had to say.

And so the Committee's mission did not include what some people imagined it did. For example, its mission did not include the task of lessening the tension, for the reasons of this tension are not to be found in Egypt. Moreover, it is not in the hands of the Committee; the reasons for the tension being the fever of force which afflicted the authorities in London and Paris! For example, its mission did not include the task of twisting Egypt's arm to make her accept its proposals. For example, its mission did not include the task of opening the door of negotiations with Egypt for various reasons, the first of which is that the Committee had not been charged with negotiating or with bearing Egyptian counter-proposals.

.../Secondly



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Secondly, if Egypt negotiates, she has to negotiate with all the Powers using the Canal and not some of them, otherwise this would mean discrimination in favour of some of those using it against the others, a matter in which Egypt is keen on equality since she considers it an integral part of the freedom of navigation in the Canal.

Thirdly, Egypt cannot negotiate under the threat of guns.

There is no doubt that the Committee realized all this since the first minute of being charged with this mission. There is also no doubt that this is the very motive which dictated to it the terms of its mission written by Menzies in his letter to President Abdel Nasser, namely: "Present and explain to you".

Within these terms of reference ... limits of presentation and explanation, the Egyptian side did all in its power to give it every opportunity to perform its mission and made no attempt at any time to cause it any kind of embarrassment or push it outside the boundaries of its mission for any reason.

Egypt made no attempt to embarrass the Committee to such a degree that President Gamal Abdel Nasser did not want to raise with Mr. Menzies the question of the declarations made by the Australian War Minister about Australian forces being ready to take part in the Canal battle if force was used against Egypt.

When Mr. Menzies saw fit, of his own accord and of his own free will, to make an explanation about these declarations, President Gamal Abdel Nasser accepted this explanation in a true friendly spirit.

Egypt also did not attempt to push the Committee out of the boundaries of its mission, to such a degree that the Egyptian side did not make any attempt to contact the Committee or any one of its members outside the scope of the official meetings. These meetings were always decided at the request of the Committee.

All these factors helped the Committee and enabled it to perform its mission.

Present .... and explain ....

All this has gone on in an atmosphere of complete frankness.

The Committee has submitted and explained the plan which it brought with it:-

What was stated in the introduction of this plan about the seriousness of the situation?

What was stated in the introduction of this plan connected with the desire of looking for a peaceful solution ... ?

What was stated in the introduction of this plan about recognising Egypt's sovereignty and not wanting to affect it?

What was mentioned in Article 1 of this plan about reaffirming respect of the 1888 Convention which guaranteed freedom of navigation for all States in all times .. ?

What was mentioned in Article 3 of this plan about the desire to establish an administration for the Suez Canal in which Egypt would participate with other States to be selected? This administration would carry out the management in a manner to secure freedom of

.../navigation

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navigation and the efficiency of the Canal to face the future and to keep the Canal far from politics and to fix passage dues in a manner that would not affect the interests of its users.

Egypt did not sit silent while listening to this introduction and explanation. In her turn, she presented and explained her point of view on what was put to her.

More than that she agreed literally, met with in many points with the Menzies Committee.

She agreed with the plan brought by the Menzies Committee in judging the gravity of the situation, although she explained that she was not responsible for this danger and that those who were responsible for it were those who concentrated armies and assembled fleets.

She agreed with the plan brought by the Menzies Committee, unconditionally and without any reservation, on the point of its desire to seek a peaceful solution.

She also agreed, unconditionally and without any reservation, on the point of adhering to Egypt's sovereignty and not wanting to affect it.

Also she agreed, unconditionally and without reservation, on respecting the 1888 Convention which guarantees freedom of navigation in all times and for all States.

The question on which Egypt did not see eye to eye with literally, met with the plan brought by the Committee was the establishment of the Suez Canal Administration Board on which Egypt and other countries to be agreed upon would be represented.

Even on this point Egypt did not just say "no". She explained her views taking into account not only the question of sovereignty but also practical considerations directly relating to the freedom of navigation in the Canal.

Egypt's views on this point were as follows:

Egypt is not at all prepared to accept international control but Egypt is prepared to accept - to an unlimited degree - international co-operation. In fact, any international board would never be the authority which would undertake to protect navigation in the Canal. The real authority is the Egyptian people and the Egyptian Army, unless the international administration were to evacuate the Egyptian residents from the area and unless the international administration were to bring with it international forces to carry out its orders. Both of which are naturally impossible.....

If an international administration is imposed on Egypt, then it will not be capable of protecting the Canal. It will need protection for itself because every Egyptian will look upon it as a symbol of foreign domination which seeks to usurp the Canal from its rightful owner.

This means that the proposed international administration will not be the end of the problem, but would mean the beginning of the problem.

This is in regard to what Egypt calls international domination, which she rejects. As for international co-operation, which she accepts, Egypt is prepared if the question is one of free navigation to discuss it. If it is a question of non-discrimination against any of the users of the Canal, Egypt is also prepared to discuss it.

.../if

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If it is a question of transit tolls to safeguard the interests of all parties concerned, Egypt is also prepared to discuss it.

If it is a question of maintaining the Canal in good working order and in keeping with progress and development in the size of ships and tankers, Egypt is prepared to discuss it.

This is the situation in its true light up to this minute.

TIMES

31 AUG 1956

J

JE142M/1462

**ITALIAN HOPES OF CONCILIATION**

**PRAISE FOR BRITISH ATTITUDE**

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

ROME, Aug. 30

A short-lived sensation was caused to-day by a statement alleged to have been made by the Foreign Minister, Signor Martino, to the foreign affairs commission of the Chamber of Deputies in his report last night on the London conference, according to which the Italian Government had advance information from the Egyptian Government of Colonel Nasser's intention to nationalize the Suez Canal Company, this information being forwarded by Signor Martino to Mr. Dulles.

In addition to an official denial issued to-day from the Palazzo Chigi, Signor Martino in a conversation with your correspondent repeated the denial.

"The Italian Government," he said, "has had no communication whatsoever from the Egyptian Government which may have indicated the intention to nationalize the Suez Canal Company. Our diplomatic analysis, just as those of other countries, had naturally realized such a possibility after the withdrawal of financial assistance for the construction of the Aswan dam."

**MORE OPTIMISTIC**

Signor Martino said he is now slightly more optimistic than he was immediately after his return from the conference in London. "I have the impression that the tension in Cairo has diminished and that a more conciliatory action by the Egyptian Government may be expected when Mr. Menzies's delegation sits down with Colonel Nasser to work out a solution to the problem. I also think that the Egyptian counter-proposal may well turn out to be more acceptable than the minority proposal submitted to the London conference by Mr. Krishna Menon."

Returning to the subject of the London conference, Signor Martino highly praised the "mature statesmanship" of Mr. Selwyn Lloyd and the British delegation to the Suez canal conference. The calm reasonableness of the British delegation was one of the major factors for the success of the conference. In spite of the fact that the issue is vital for Britain, it was the British delegation which gave the best example of cool-headed, clear thinking.

S. J. S. wanted to send a message of thanks. Draft attached. P/L 1/3.

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FROM CAIRO TO FOREIGN OFFICE

En Clair

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Sir H. Trevelyan

No. 2036  
September 10, 1956

D. 9.12 p.m. September 10, 1956  
R. 11.18 p.m. September 10, 1956

Addressed to Foreign Office telegram No. 2036 of September 10,  
Repeated for information to Washington, P.O.M.E.F.  
and Saving to Paris Addis Ababa.  
Khartoum

My telegram No. 2009 (not to all).

Press today gave greatest prominence to texts of letters exchanged between Australian Prime Minister and Nasser (my telegrams Nos. 2000 and 2010).  
Joint statement announcing end of talks which had been conducted with complete frankness and in an informal manner was also published. Ahram indicated that it had supposed brief joint statement would be sufficient but Nasser had wanted to reiterate Egyptian right to nationalise the Canal. All papers also reported Australian Prime Minister's description of the situation as being very, very grave.

2. Press also gave prominence to following items.

(A) Wedge-driving comment by manager of Middle East News that majority of Committee members were convinced of soundness of Egyptian attitude and that as a result differences had arisen between Committee members outside meetings held at Presidency. It was certain that Menzies would fully report opinions of Committee members to French and British Prime Ministers.

(B) Ahram report that British Prime Minister had sent urgent letter to Eisenhower saying that position of American member of Committee was not consonant with full cooperation. Rose El Youssef commented that Henderson was real power behind the scenes because of influence he could exert over delegates of Iran and Ethiopia.

(C) Reported statement by Sudanese Foreign Minister that in view of friendly Ethiopian-Sudanese relations he had explained to Ethiopian delegation Egyptian and Arab view point on the Canal and had learned from delegation that Ethiopia had agreed to take part in London Conference and Five Power Committee only to serve Egypt's interest.

(This appeared in Schaab of September 9).

/(D)

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- aire telegram No. 2036 to Foreign Office

- 2 -

(D) Report of interview between Nasser and Ethiopian Foreign Minister.

(E) Reports of series of inter-Arab meetings in Cairo which discussed convening of Arab League Political Committee in Beirut very soon.

(F) Continued reports emphasising flood of applications for posts as Canal pilots. Akhbar reported that written examinations for one hundred applicants would be held today. Twenty three Egyptians had been appointed during last two weeks.

(G) Expressions of Arab support for Egypt.

3. Editorial comment emphasised firmness of Egyptian stand. Shaab said Nasser's letter to Menzies revealed the frankness, strength and moderation of Egyptian attitude. Akhbar commented that provided London statesmen were literate they would find in records of Nasser's meetings with Five Power Committee incontrovertible proof that Egypt was not recalcitrant. She welcomed cooperation but refused foreign domination. Author hinted that real question might not be Canal issue but realisation by imperialism that unless it destroyed Egyptian freedom it had no hope of surviving itself. Anwar Sadat in Gomhouria quoted Intelligence Digest and New Statesman of September 8 as making it clear that real British aim was not to ensure freedom of navigation but to revise old British Empire.

Pass to Washington as my telegram 304 and to Paris as my Saving telegram No. 287.

[Repeated to Washington and Saving to Paris]

ZZZZ

SECRET

FROM WASHINGTON TO FOREIGN OFFICE

J

Cypher/OTP

FOREIGN OFFICE SECRET AND  
WHITEHALL SECRET DISTRIBUTION

Sir R. Makins  
No. 1884  
September 11, 1956.

D. 9.20 p.m. September 11, 1956.  
R. 10.54 p.m. September 11, 1956.

EMERGENCY  
SECRET

JE 11/11/56

Addressed to Foreign Office telegram No. 1884 of September 11.  
Repeated for information to U.K. Del. New York

RECEIVED  
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Cairo  
Paris  
P.O.M.E.F. - 11045

SEP 11 1956  
WHITEHALL

Paris telegrams Nos. 301 and 302 and your telegram No. 2916 to  
Cairo: Suez Canal Pilots. JE 11/11/56 NYR

Mr. Rountree has telephoned to me on Mr. Dulles instructions. The Secretary of State had heard on the news ticker of the action that was being taken by the Suez Canal Company in relation to their employees today. Mr. Dulles feels that it would be most unfortunate if the pilots should leave at this time. A cardinal aspect of the situation, in Mr. Dulles' view, has been that the responsibility for any interference with the passage of the Canal should rest unequivocally on Egypt and should not be attributable in any way to the West. This move might well cloud the issue. Mr. Rountree added that Mr. Dulles thought it essential that these pilots should be kept together for future employment.

2. Mr. Dulles had requested my French colleague to ask his Government to do whatever they could to ensure that the pilots stayed for a few days longer.

3. I reminded Mr. Rountree that I had warned the Secretary of State on September 9 that a move of this kind was in the wind and had again told him on September 10 that arrangements were being made to ensure that the employees were kept together. Mr. Rountree said that Mr. Dulles had not realised action was so imminent. I then read to Mr. Rountree the statement in paragraph 2 of your telegram No. 2916 to Cairo showing the position of Her Majesty's Government in this matter. Mr. Rountree said

/that this

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SECRET

Washington telegram No. 1884 to Foreign Office

- 2 -

that this was fine as far as it went, but was it not possible to indicate, as had been done before the London Conference, the need for the pilots to hang on a bit longer.

4. My French colleague has since telephoned to say that he is strongly of the opinion that in present circumstances the employees should not be allowed to leave in the near future and has telegraphed accordingly to Paris.

5. As you know, I myself have felt strongly that this is an unfortunate move in view of the negotiations for C.A.S.U. which have been in progress.

Please pass Cairo, Paris and P.O.M.E.F. as my telegrams Nos. 144, 158, and 67 respectively.

[Repeated to Cairo, Paris, P.O.M.E.F.].

ADVANCE COPIES TO:

Private Secretary  
Sir I. Kirkpatrick  
Mr. Nutting  
Mr. Murray  
Mr. Ross  
Mr. Pink  
Head of African Department  
Head of United Nations Department  
Head of News Department  
Head of General Department  
Resident Clerk

SECRET



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FROM AMMAN TO FOREIGN OFFICE

En Clair

*JE 142.11/1465*

FOREIGN OFFICE AND WHITEHALL  
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Sir C. Duke  
No: 1257  
September 10, 1956.

D: 11.08 a.m. September 11, 1956.  
R: 11.13 a.m. September 11, 1956.

Addressed to Foreign Office telegram No: 1257 of  
September 10

Repeated for information to: Beirut. Cairo. P.O.M.E.F..

My immediately preceding telegram. *JE 142.11/1465*

Addifa'a today says that the protest of the West against the nationalization of the Canal is aimed at paving the way for Israel to usurp the remainder of Palestine. "The Arabs should realize that the West has been conspiring against them. Now is the time for them to retaliate". A unified feeling of support for Egypt will not "repulse the aggressions of States like Britain and France who sucked the blood of the Arab and who are known for their enmity to the Arabs". It calls for "a unanimous decision to stop oil supplies, the withdrawal of Iraq from the Bagdad Pact and the abrogation of all treaties and agreements between the Arab States and the Western Powers".

2. Al Jihad says that the Menzies Mission was bound to fail because Nasser had already refused to accept international control of the Canal and because Britain and France tried to threaten Egypt militarily. Britain would not "make such a fuss" if the Canal had been handed over normally to Egypt in 1968. The reason for "the fuss" now is that Egypt is a military force which threatens Israel. "It is Israel and not the Canal which occupies the minds of Britain and France, who attempt to strike Egypt to pave the way for the occupation of the Gaza Strip by the Jews".

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