

affecting United States security. According to the memorandum of discussion, it was his opinion that:

"This action had been apparently precipitated by the Israelis, though their reasons for doing so at this particular time were difficult to fathom. The resort to force, thought Mr. Dulles, might simply reflect the return of the strong man, Ben-Gurion, as Minister of Defense; but again, there was no clear and precise motivation which could be cited." (Eisenhower Library, Whitman File, NSC Records)

39. Telegram From the Embassy in Egypt to the Department of State ¹

Cairo, March 4, 1955—noon.

1279. For the Secretary. Absence of USG comment re Gaza attack beginning to be noticeable here. Headline this morning *Egyptian Gazette* gives British position as follows:

"Britain blames Israel: attack premeditated". Article quotes authoritative British sources in Foreign Office attributable mostly to Nutting. Radio Ankara last night took same line for Turkish Government. British Embassy locally has now found ways of letting their feelings leak to press. Embassy has not commented to press.

The above and other factors will cause US position in SC to be reviewed with extraordinary scrutiny.

Department will of course be aware that all this bodes ill for operation Alpha and timetable at least will have to be readjusted. Egyptian authorities (with exception of the travelling Salah Salem) are exercising remarkable restraint re attack and its aftermath of refugee rioting but will be some time before they forget their dead and be willing to cooperate with us in finding overall solution.

I told Eban prior to my departure ² that I would work on Egypt as quickly as possible to advance general relations between Israel and Egypt, the lifting of the blockade, et cetera as I knew this to be in interests my own country as well as Israel. I strongly urged restraint on their part on matters relating to Egypt in order that we might have climate here in which to work. I told him past experi-

¹ Source: Department of State, Central Files, 664A.66/3-455. Top Secret; Priority; Alpha; Limited Distribution. Received at 11:39 a.m. Repeated to London and Tel Aviv.

² No record of this conversation has been found in Department of State files.