

No. 139

780.5/6-1153: Telegram

The Acting Permanent Representative on the North Atlantic Council (Anderson) to the Department of State

TOP SECRET

PARIS, June 11, 1953—9 p. m.

Polto 2367. Department pass Secretary of Defense. Following formal council session yesterday afternoon, ¹ permanent representatives met informally to hear Turkish statement regarding MEDO. In lengthy exposé Turk emphasized strategic military and political importance Middle East for defense of free world and vital necessity of establishing regional defense organization. Efforts heretofore made to bring about realization of MEDO have been checked by (1) Arab-Israeli differences and (2) deterioration Egypt-United Kingdom relations.

Turkey regards possibility of British withdrawal from Suez with great anxiety in view absence any defense system which could fill vacuum thus created. Turk emphasized this problem of concern not only to United Kingdom and Egypt, but to all of NATO countries, and it is duty of latter to give United Kingdom full support. . . . This creates grave situation which could easily play into hands of Soviets. Therefore, NATO powers should take drastic measures to organize Middle Eastern defense since united front would show Arab States they cannot play Soviets against Western powers.

Arab Governments are far from stable and subject to frequent revolutionary changes. Under circumstances, defense of Middle East should be organized without Arab participation and without Israeli as well, but doors should be kept open to ultimate membership.

United Kingdom representative expressed appreciation Turkish remarks, stating no government should permit Egypt to think one NATO partner can be played off against another. Evacuation of Canal Zone is last thing United Kingdom wants to do, but it is difficult to see how progress can be made toward organization Middle East defense unless Egyptian Government is reasonably well disposed. Turk replied firm attitude on part of NATO governments will doubtless have salutary effect on Egypt.

Ismay wondered why it would not be possible to organize MEDO without immediate Egyptian participation, feeling that such step would have powerful influence on Egypt. He had been impressed

¹ For documentation on this topic, see vol. v, Part 1, pp. 408 ff.