

No. 603

684A.85/5-553: Telegram

*The Chargé In Israel (Russell) to the Department of State*¹

SECRET

TEL AVIV, May 5, 1953—3 p. m.

1708. While it is important determine responsibility for Jerusalem incident (Embassy telegram 1683)² more vital task is taking steps reduce basic causes such incidents.

In reply to recent inquiry to General Riley whether he felt infiltration problem substantially worse than in past and therefore a convincing explanation of Israel Government's recent actions and policies or whether Israel Government currently blowing up infiltration problem as a means of forcing bilateral talks between Israel and her neighbors, Riley indicated in his opinion probably a little of both.

Most serious border incidents at present are on Israel-Jordan frontier. Israel-Jordan relations deteriorated after resignation last year of Ahmed Bey Touqan as result inability get Jordan Cabinet agree on stronger infiltration law and obtain support for settlement of Kalkilyer and Latrun problems (Jerusalem Contel 51 June 29, 1952,³ and Embtel 105).⁴ Inclination Arab leaders use refugees as weapon against Israel (Baghdad's despatch 477, January 13)⁵ and statements from time to time by them directed at Israel have not helped.

Israelis at fault for attributing doubtful incidents to infiltration; unnecessary ruthlessness in cases of relatively harmless and inevitable infiltration; irritating aggressiveness within the Israel-Jordan MAC (e.g. unwarranted demands for emergency MAC meetings, renunciation of local commanders agreements); dramatizing and publicizing certain incidents in manner which has effect of discrediting MAC machinery and MAC personnel; and for high-handed acts of reprisal against innocent persons. Tripartite powers should continue press strongly against all such action.

Necessary realize, however, that infiltration has strong political psychological impact on Israelis. Not mere question of statistics.

¹ Repeated to London, Paris, Cairo, Beirut, Damascus, Amman, and Jerusalem.

² Telegram 1683 from Tel Aviv, May 5, dealt with the exchange of fire in Jerusalem on Apr. 22. (684A.85/4-3053)

³ Not printed.

⁴ Document 458.

⁵ In despatch 477 from Baghdad, Jan. 13, not printed, Ambassador Barry reported on his recent conversations concerning refugee matters with the Iraqi Minister of Social Affairs, Said Qazzaz, and with Count Adam Knuth, the UNRWA representative in Baghdad. (887.411/1-1353)