

## No. 776

684A.96/3-1854: Telegram

*The Chargé in Israel (Russell) to the Department of State*<sup>1</sup>

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950. For Defense and USCINCEUR. Reference Deptel 654.<sup>2</sup> Embassy knows of no indications of aggressive intent such as call up of reserves or large-scale troop movements (Embtel 943).<sup>3</sup> Rotation of infantry battalions in Jerusalem corridor and Beitnabale area past week does not appear to have special significance.

On other hand, ambush of Israel bus in eastern Negev (Embtel 946)<sup>3</sup> brings series of recent Arab-Israel inflammatory incidents to acute point with responsibility divided and cause and effect difficult assess.

On one side have been: Arab infiltration and marauding and occasional murders; occasional firing and throwing of missiles by Arabs from wall of old city Jerusalem; Syrian firing upon Israel boats in Lake Tiberias; recent movement of Syrian and Lebanese troops toward border (Damascus 398);<sup>3</sup> and ambush of Negev bus (likely to be especially bitter to IDF Chief of Staff Dayan, since number of passengers were returning from leave where Dayan two days before had made speech saying "regime which builds policy on economic stranglehold of Israel, claims to be at war with her and sets itself goal of severing Negev from Israel is in for a downfall"). This is against background of prospective relinquishment of Suez case to Egypt and US program of providing arms to Arab States as part of area security program, both of which have raised fear on part of Israelis of overconfidence by Arabs with mounting pressures and attacks upon Israel.

On other hand, have been: Israel's activities in various demilitarized zones, unnecessarily harsh ambushing of Arabs crossing borders with non-aggressive intent; indications of Israel aggressive intent in press commentary time of Egyptian and Syrian political crises; use of landbased artillery for first time in firing upon Syrian villages on eastern shore of Lake Tiberias; reported killing of Jordanian shepherds at Yruod (Amman telegram 359).<sup>3</sup>

Present situation contains makings of renewed outbreak of armed warfare between Israel and Arab States and is developing

<sup>1</sup> Repeated to Amman, Baghdad, Beirut, Cairo, Damascus, Jidda, Jerusalem, Paris, London, and Rome.

<sup>2</sup> Document 774.

<sup>3</sup> Not printed.