

## No. 779

864A.86/4-1954: Telegram

*The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Israel*<sup>1</sup>

CONFIDENTIAL

WASHINGTON, March 19, 1954—7:12 p. m.

659. Ref Tel Aviv 934<sup>2</sup> and 950,<sup>3</sup> Damascus 403,<sup>4</sup> Amman 361<sup>5</sup> and other recent telegrams from these posts reporting local uneasiness and allegations of hostile intentions by Israel against certain Arab states and vice versa.

For discretionary use, Dept has no information indicating Israel in foreseeable future intends pursue expansionist policy or that Arabs intend open "second round". On contrary, Israel reinforcement Syrian and Egyptian frontiers considered normal precautionary measures under circumstances then existing. Dept understands Israel reserves called up Feb 27 have been released (Tel Aviv 934), UN source reports no evidence Israel concentration of forces (Jerusalem 129)<sup>6</sup> and Amman reftel reports no evidence of Israel military buildup in Jordan. This situation might be changed in light Syrian military movements (Damascus SA-524)<sup>6</sup> for which apparently only slight justification.

Further Dept has no information deliberate provocation by Syrians or Israelis Lake Tiberias and vicinity or that Jordanians were responsible for bus incident or that Israelis staged it. MAC charged with responsibility investigating incidents and charges and counter-charges serve no beneficial purpose unless made in MAC itself.

<sup>1</sup> Sent also to Damascus, Amman, Beirut, Cairo, London, Paris, and Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup> Telegram 934 from Tel Aviv, Mar. 15, reported on the call-up of Israeli reserve forces on Feb. 27 to reinforce the border with Syria, and on the unofficially reported call-up of reserves in the central and southern command areas to reinforce the Egyptian border. In the Embassy's view, this activity was for the purpose of strengthening defensive preparations in the light of internal strife in Syria and Egypt, particularly in the light of closer relations between Syria and Iraq, "and to be in position of general readiness in event Syrian and Egyptian episodes should develop into situation of increasing instability among Arabs." The Embassy reported that the larger part of the reserves called up now been released. (683.84A/3-1554)

<sup>3</sup> Document 776.

<sup>4</sup> Telegram 403 from Damascus, Mar. 18, commented on telegram 934 from Tel Aviv. The Embassy reported in part that the Government of Syria had sent no reinforcements to the Syro-Israeli frontier until after the recent Lake Tiberias incidents and reported Israeli build-up. This sequence of events, plus the paralysis of the Syrian Government beginning Feb. 25, constituted *prima facie* evidence, the Embassy believed, that the Syrian reaction on Mar. 15, unlike the Israeli move on Feb. 27, was defensive in character. The Embassy saw no evidence that Syria, either alone or in federation with Iraq, would wish to upset the 1949 Armistice Agreement. (683.84A/3-1554)

<sup>5</sup> Document 775.

<sup>6</sup> Not printed.