

No. 1124

774.5/3-1653: Telegram

*The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Egypt*¹

TOP SECRET PRIORITY WASHINGTON, March 16, 1953—6:01 p. m.

1829. Text informal memo to British on Egyptian situation has been transmitted in preceding message. British Ambassador upon receiving memo questioned if we were still in agreement with them upon necessity for having all five phases tied together in single package.²

We explained we believed there was no disagreement between us upon policy objectives. Question Middle East Defense arrangements was obviously linked in our minds with question of Suez Base and troop evacuation questions. We had often told British, however, these questions must not be publicly linked in a manner which would make impossible successful negotiations with Egyptians. It had been our view that as questions of the Base proper, evacuation, and integrated air defense were discussed, conversations would naturally flow into broader aspects of problem. If a degree of secret diplomacy could have been utilized we felt these subjects would naturally become linked together and that a satisfactory over-all agreement could have been reached. As subject of US participation and tie-in of defense arrangements with evacuation had now been leaked to Press and hence are public issues, great effort will now be required to get things back under control, if that is indeed possible.

British Ambassador was informed only course open in our opinion was for British to start discussions on bi-lateral basis at earliest possible moment. This should probably be done without Slim's participation. If they could start talks quickly and quietly on first three phases, there was still chance that subject of ME Defense could be negotiated as part of the package. If discussions on first three were proceeding satisfactorily, it appeared to us that our own open entry into conversations at later time might be helpful. We could then be in position of saying that arrangements contemplated for Suez Base, etc. appeared satisfactory to us provided there were over-all arrangements into which local solutions would fit. In this manner we might be able help British in broadening the discussions.

¹ Repeated priority to London as telegram 6156. Drafted and approved by Byrroade.

² See footnote 3, Document 1082.