

641.74/10-253: Telegram

*The Ambassador in Egypt (Caffery) to the Department of State*<sup>1</sup>

SECRET PRIORITY

CAIRO, October 22, 1953—3 p. m.

489. It appears from Egyptian and British accounts of yesterday's meeting (mytels 486<sup>2</sup> and 488) that agreement on most issues is possible but it is clear that all attempts to compromise or gloss over underlying differences of principle on "uniforms" and "availability" have been unsuccessful. It is possible, therefore, unless concessions of principle are made, next meeting will see breakdown of talks.

(1) It strikes me that despite apparent reasonableness of latest British offer on uniforms British are in weak position in insisting on right of technicians to wear uniforms "when ordered" (British technical advisor would have right to order).

(a) Egyptians have never been willing to concede principle that technicians could publicly have other than civilian status. To do so would in Egyptian eyes be tantamount to accepting continuation of "occupation"—a thing which no Egyptian Government could do.

(b) British Government through Stevenson made proposal on April 11, 1951<sup>3</sup> which included "progressive civilianization of the base. . . essential British civilian personnel being introduced as military personnel are withdrawn."

(c) From Egyptian viewpoint British position on uniforms shows no significant changes so long as right to wear military uniforms is insisted on. Therefore Egyptians feel British have not come through on Robertson's implied offer to trade concessions on uniforms and availability in return for Egyptian acceptance British views on base organization (mytel 462).<sup>2</sup>

(2) On "availability" stand Egyptians are on less firm ground. Despite Nasir's repeated insistence that automatic availability cannot be extended beyond case of attack on Arab State and that consultation adequately covers other situations, I believe there is slight remaining hope Egyptians could be persuaded go along with something very close to present British formula if British will abandon their position on uniforms.

It seems to me that what we want is an available base and that we are not very much interested in haberdashery.

<sup>1</sup> Repeated priority to London as telegram 198.

<sup>2</sup> Not printed.

<sup>3</sup> For documentation, see *Foreign Relations*, 1951, vol. v, pp. 356 ff.