

No: 1263

641.74/12-2853: Telegram

*The Charge in Egypt (Jones) to the Department of State*¹

SECRET

CAIRO, December 28, 1953—3 p. m.

716. Following is Stevenson's account of informal get-together December 26 (Embassy's 710, December 23)² at which Egyptians represented by Nasir, Salah Salim and Amir; British by Stevenson, Creswell and General Benson.

1. Meeting lasted for four hours in course which, while it was possible to remove a number of, "misapprehensions", Egyptians were "even firmer than on December 22" regarding availability and uniforms. Egyptians stated base could only be automatically available in event of attack on Arab States. Re uniforms, Egyptians said that they must emphasize publicly "civilian character" of technicians. For this reason they objected to British "Deputy Commander" and preferred title "Director of Technicians". (Stevenson commented that there may be trouble ahead on this point because if UK considers base military and Egypt considers base as civilian; a conflict of interpretations comparable to that which wrecked Bevin-Sidky agreement could arise.)

2. Only advance from British point of view was Egyptian acceptance of "working base" for seven years from ratification of detailed agreement. Egyptians complained they could never accept an "open-end" agreement comparable to that of 1936. British said they understood this and suggested that after seven years as "working base" removal of stores and equipment could be accomplished by civilian contractors. They promised Egyptians to seek a rough estimate as to how long this might take.

3. If meeting of minds can be achieved, procedure contemplated is that both sides would initial heads of agreement. As soon as possible thereafter, detailed agreement would be worked out and signed. After being tabled in Commons for 21 days, British Government would be ready to exchange ratifications with Egyptian Government. Times specified in agreement would date from ratification exchange.

¹ Repeated to London as telegram 248.

² Ambassador Caffery informed the Department in telegram 710, Dec. 23, not printed, that Stevenson had lunched with Nasir and Saleh Salem the previous day; that the atmosphere was cordial; that availability and uniforms were not discussed; that the Egyptians brought up the old charge that the British were continuing to raise new issues and asked for a promise that this procedure would end; and that Stevenson assured them that nothing new would be added for future discussion. (641.74/12-2353)