

No. 1298

641.74/3-1754: Telegram

*The Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Aldrich) to the
Department of State*¹

TOP SECRET PRIORITY

LONDON, March 17, 1954—1 p. m.

3991. Re Deptel 4699 and Embtel 3956.² At Eden's request, I called late last evening and he handed me an *aide-memoire* on Egypt summarized below (text pouched today).³

Begin Summary. Negotiations now held-up by two main issues, availability and uniforms. On first, Egyptians had indicated they would be prepared make base available in event of attack on Turkey though not Iran. This "to a great extent" would meet British requirements on availability but divergence on uniforms still unreconciled. Whole issue largely one of confidence. Behavior of Egyptian Government over Sudan, violent attacks in speeches Egyptian Ministers and continuance terrorist activities make it impossible for HMG have any confidence that Egyptian Government would adhere to agreement on Canal Zone if one were made. In particular, to leave 4,000 British soldiers in Canal Zone whether in uniform or not would be "offering hostages to fortune". At same time HMG anxious reach agreement and believe Egyptians are too and that if Anglo-Egyptian relations are ever to be placed on better footing, present may be right moment seek agreement.

HMG, therefore, considering whether it would be possible abandon idea of keeping British soldiers in Egypt to maintain base after withdrawal British forces and substitute concept maintaining installations with civilian contract labor. At same time, HMG would expect to secure right re-enter base in case real emergency and would expect that Egypt in return for total evacuation British troops would be prepared grant this right over considerably longer period than seven years contemplated.

Main outlines of new plan under consideration are:

- (a) British troops would redeploy elsewhere than in Egypt.
- (b) UK would obtain right re-enter base in case of attack on Egypt, and Arab state or Turkey, and immediate consultations in case of threatened attack on these or Iran. "A 20-year life for this arrangement" should be sought.

¹ Repeated priority to Cairo as telegram 107.

² In telegram 3956 from London, Mar. 15, not printed, the Department was informed that Aldrich on Mar. 9 had spoken to Eden along the lines of telegram 4699, Mar. 12, *supra*, and that upon receipt of that instruction, the Chargé, Butterworth, reiterated Aldrich's remarks to Eden. Butterworth also believed it likely that the Cabinet would authorize Eden to resume the negotiations along the lines suggested by Nasir. (641.74/3-1554)

³ Not printed; the *aide-memoire* was transmitted in despatch 3136 from London, Mar. 17. (641.74/3-1754)