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E. O. 11652, Sec. 3(E) and 5(D) or (F)
Depr. of State letter, 7-15-73
By NET-HC, NARS Date 8-26-75

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

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August 16, 1948

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Proposed Representations to Provisional Government of Israel
Regarding Maintenance of Peace in Palestine.

Information from a wide number of sources causes the Department increasing concern over the apparent tendency of the Provisional Government of Israel to assume a more aggressive attitude in Palestine.

Following the termination of the British mandate on May 15 and the establishment of a Jewish State, the Israeli authorities were quick to respond to United Nations efforts to stop the fighting in Palestine. After the termination of this four-week truce on July 9, hostilities were resumed and it soon became apparent that Israel had materially improved its military position during the period of the earlier truce. Nevertheless, both the Government of Israel and the Arab States agreed to accept the Security Council's order of July 15 for a cease-fire and truce of indefinite duration in Palestine. The demilitarization of Jerusalem was included in the Security Council's resolution and was accepted by the Government of Israel and the Arab States in principle. In recent weeks, however, a new and aggressive note has become manifest, and the readiness of Israel to maintain the truce has become subject to doubt.

The Department has noted evidence of hostility of Israelis in Palestine toward the military observers serving under Count Bernadotte; the inflammatory speeches of the Israeli Foreign Minister, Mr. Shertok, with regard to alleged "rights" of Israel in Jerusalem; the military occupation by Israel of much of the Jerusalem area; and the refusal of the Israeli military governor in Jerusalem to cooperate with Count Bernadotte in discussions regarding the demilitarization of Jerusalem. The Department has likewise noted increasing evidence of systematic violations of the United Nations truce by the forces of Israel, including forward movement of Israeli forces from agreed truce positions, continued sniping and firing against Arab positions; and conclusive evidence of the organized transport of arms shipments to Palestine from France, Italy and Czechoslovakia. Furthermore, the Israeli Foreign Minister has officially proclaimed that Israel will not accept, pending

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negotiation of a final peace settlement, the return of the approximately 300,000 Arab inhabitants of that part of Palestine now comprising the Jewish State who fled from their homes and are now destitute in nearby Arab areas.

The Foreign Minister of Great Britain, in a conversation with our Ambassador on August 6, expressed grave concern over the situation in Palestine. He was fearful not only that the USSR would take advantage of this situation to foment trouble in Iraq and Iran but also that within "the next few days" the Jews, on grounds of some Arab provocation, real or manufactured, would reopen their offensive with the objective of seizing more territory - probably Transjordan. Mr. Bevin thought that the Palestine situation was as serious as Berlin. "If the United States and United Kingdom go slack (in Palestine), we lose."

The Department, in light of these developments, feels that it would be wise to call in Mr. Elishu Epstein, the Representative of the Provisional Government of Israel, and discuss frankly our concern with him. We would tell Mr. Epstein that, as he undoubtedly knows, the United States is the best friend of Israel. We have recognized that State and desire to see it continue in existence and prosper as a peaceful member of the community of nations. We have now before us the question of de jure recognition of the Provisional Government of Israel, support for Israel's membership in the United Nations, and the application from Israel for a loan from the Export-Import Bank. We should like to see all these matters arranged in a manner satisfactory to both governments but we should find it exceedingly difficult, for example, to advocate a loan to Israel if that country is likely to resume hostilities. Similar difficulties would arise concerning membership in the United Nations.

As a friend of Israel we deem it of paramount importance that this new republic not place itself before the bar of world opinion and the United Nations in the role of an aggressor. We should like to tell Mr. Epstein for the information of his government that we shall be not less zealous in the Security Council to oppose aggression from the Israeli side as we were when the attack was launched by the Arab side.

From the wider political aspect and not for the information of Mr. Epstein, it is obvious that it would be most injurious to the interests of the United States if hostilities should be opened by Israel against Transjordan with the result that the United Kingdom would automatically honor its commitments to Transjordan under its existing treaty with that country. This would bring forth an outcry in the United States for the lifting of our arms embargo in favor of Israel,

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with the result that the two great Anglo-Saxon partners would be supplying and aiding two little states on the opposite sides of a serious war, from which only the Soviet Union could profit.

With your concurrence the Under Secretary of State proposes immediately to discuss these matters with Mr. Epstein.



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