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Telegram From the Embassy in the United Arab Republic to the Department of State/1/

Cairo, June 28, 1963, 3 p.m.

/1/Source: Department of State, Central Files, POL 7 US/MCCLOY. Secret; Priority; Eyes Only-Cane. Received at 11:27 a.m. and repeated to London for Talbot.

2470. From McCloy. Part I.

Accompanied by Ambassador Badeau, I met with Nasser at 7 p.m. Thursday and spent 2 hours with him. After a brief chat with President in which the Ambassador said he was fully acquainted with the substance of Mr. McCloy's visit, he left in order to give full freedom for a private exchange of views.

Nasser was most affable recalling our previous meetings and the work which had been done in connection with the canal clearance./2/ etc. After thanking him for conforming to my convenience in setting the time of my visit I stated that at the instance of the President and the Secretary of State I was calling upon him on a matter which deeply concerned them, namely the avoidance of an ascending nuclear and missile arms race between GUAR and Israel. What follows is the substance of my presentation:

/2/Reference is to McCloy's role in helping to facilitate the clearance and reopening of the Suez Canal following the 1956 Arab-Israeli war. For documentation, see Foreign Relations, 1955-1957, vol. XVI, pp. 1175 ff. and vol. XVII, pp. 467 ff.

I stated that the President was deeply interested in the stability of the Middle East so that economic progress could continue there free of the diversions which an arms race involved. The United States had many important interests in the area and was most anxious to preserve Middle East stability and its own good relations with the UAR as well as with the other countries of the area. An intensive arms race particularly in the field of nuclear and missile development was contrary to the interests of both the US and the whole Middle East area. I stated that the President felt that in this respect there was a clear common interest which could serve as a basis for a sound program from which both the UAR and Israel could benefit.

These weapons were fantastically expensive and their continued development would certainly diminish the resources which could otherwise be employed in the economic development of the countries concerned. Moreover, an arms race of this character would be bound to create instability, an increase in tensions with the constant menace of a nuclear catastrophe which could produce destruction of a character which would destroy all Nasser had been seeking to accomplish and with consequences no one could accurately appraise. The outbreak of nuclear weapons here would certainly greatly increase the chances of US involvement and this consideration gave the US added cause for seeking the means by which the threat could be removed. As a consequence I had been asked to present to him a proposal by which the UAR would renounce the manufacture and use of nuclear weapons and check the further development or use of offensive missiles. This would constitute an act of statesmanship on his part which might have a greatly beneficial effect not only in this area but on the whole world. In this connection the President would be prepared to consider what safeguards could be appropriately erected to protect the UAR in the event of such renunciation. The proposal would not encompass any agreement or deal with Israel; would not compel the discounting of any present capacity in this field and could take the form of either a public or private undertaking as the circumstances warranted. The President was fully aware that any such renunciation would require a compensatory commitment on the part of Israel.

Furthermore, the US would make its services available to assist in the observance and inspection of the critical sites so as to give assurance to both sides that no breach of the commitments was being committed. If US inspection or observance was not acceptable, perhaps an adequate form of UN observance could be instituted with the support of the US. Israel as he knew had a sizable reactor which when completed could be used for the purpose of manufacturing material for use in weapons though we had no information that the reactor was presently being used for such a purpose. This would involve adequate observance of the operations of reactors and observance of the missile development in both countries to see that no extension of present capacities was

taking place in the missile field. We know that the UAR is making real efforts in the missile field and Israel knows it. This with the employment of German experts has induced a vigorous reaction in Israel and if further efforts were made in this direction it could bring about a condition in Israel where the temptation to manufacture material for nuclear weapons would be very great. We have viewed this primarily from the point of view of our common interests. Nasser's desire to increase the well being of his people coincides with our interest in avoiding proliferation of these weapons and the consequent tensions it would induce. If you are generally skeptical of our objectivity where matters affecting Israel are concerned, I urge you to consider carefully our deep concern over the introduction of nuclear and offensive missile weapons in the Middle East area whether they be in Israeli or Arab hands.

I am not here to discuss the specific modalities with you but for the moment we would like to have you weigh carefully the proposal in its general form. We are anxious to have your reactions and any suggestions or comment you may have in regard to it. We can discuss the modalities later if you express an interest. I am prepared to discuss while I am here any suggestions or comments you may have and if I am not in a position to make definite proposals in response to them I feel that I or Ambassador Badeau are in a position to obtain prompt and clear statement from my government in this respect.

I propose to leave not later than July 1 for Athens. In the meantime I am at your service and I suggest we meet again on Saturday at the same time after you have had an opportunity to weigh the proposal. I stated that we had not discussed this matter with the Israeli government but we would contemplate an independent approach to them along the same lines if the circumstances warranted it.

We would hope the matter could be kept confidential so that our respective consideration of the matter could continue unimpeded by premature disclosures. I am prepared to do what I can to bring the matter to a point where the appropriate officials of the governments could take over. Though the matter is not one which must be concluded immediately there are conditions such as the likelihood of a Chinese nuclear explosion, the potentiality of Israel's nuclear development, and the increased tensions resulting from the missile development in the UAR which all point to the need of a timely consideration of the problem.

I then stated my plans for a visit to Greece and the islands and suggested that Ambassador Badeau and Mr. Eilts accompany me on my next visit to him on Saturday.

Part II.

Nasser listened attentively to my presentation throughout and then stated that he felt this required careful consideration and consultation with his advisers, particularly with his Chief of Staff, Marshal Abdul Hakim Amer, who was now in Yemen and who would not return to Cairo until July 4 or 5; that one day's interval was scarcely sufficient for him to give the matter the attention it demanded particularly in the absence of the Chief of Staff whose judgment he must obtain.

In the meantime, he would give me his immediate reactions for what they were worth:

First he repeated to me accurately the high points of the proposal as he understood them and he then said he would like to ask me one preliminary question. Why was I asked to come to him with this proposal at this particular time? What in my judgment had prompted the President to bring this matter up now? I told him that it was a matter which the President had in his mind for some time; that I presumed the pending discussions with the Soviet Union had something to do with it as well as the danger of escalating Middle East tensions which I had previously outlined but that I thought my own convenience had much to do with the particular date of my arrival. I pointed out that I had told the President and the Secretary that I was going to Greece with my daughter in accordance with a long standing plan; that I had engagements at home in July which I felt I had to meet and that I had suggested I could come to Cairo prior to my Aegean trip if they wished me to and that this as much as anything had fixed the date of my visit to Cairo. He seemed to accept this though it was evident he was puzzled as to the reason for the timing. (Badeau seems to feel that the pending unification discussions may make the consideration of the question at this time somewhat awkward for him and that he is suspicious of the stepped-up pressure at home for a security guaranty by Israel.)

Next he said he saw several difficulties offhand that he would tentatively express now. The first was that he might find difficulty in explaining why the UAR should at this time be singled out from all the non-nuclear powers to make this commitment and the second was the problem of inspection or observance.

The UAR had traditionally taken a very firm view against any form of inspection. They had always refused it in any form and for him to reverse his position presented real difficulties. He referred to the refusal of Egypt to yield inspection rights even to arms which had at one time been offered under the mutual aid program. I pointed out that Israel would be expected to make the same or a similar commitment. Moreover, it was conceivable that other

middle East countries might join him even though they had neither nuclear or missile capacity. He interposed the suggestion that all the non-nuclear powers in the UN might make the same commitment to which I replied that this was impractical in view of the time element as it would result in an interminable debate and delay. He said he could understand this. He then added that even though the US stood as the intermediary, it would still appear as an Israel-UAR arrangement and this might have difficulties for him. I pointed out that the UN might be the intermediary and that his own pronouncements at Belgrade and elsewhere were in keeping with any such undertakings on his part. Thinking out loud, he suggested that perhaps it could be arranged that in response to a written inquiry by the President to him regarding his intentions he could give a written reply: 1) He had no intention whatsoever of engaging in nuclear weapons and 2) he had no intention of attacking Israel. This he might be willing to do and he might not object to the full publicity of any such correspondence. His strategy was purely defensive. It was counter strategy rather than attack strategy, as he put it. At this point he narrated a full history of Israeli attacks beginning in 1952 through 1956, his request for weapons, the refusal by Britain, France and the US to give him weapons after these attacks and his final appeal to the Russians. In the course of this he spoke of the action taken by the US at the time of the Suez crisis and he again repeated his appreciation of that action. He also referred to what he felt was generally improved relations with the US. He stated he had to have planes to offset the Israeli strength in the air, particularly due to the French sale of Mirages to the Israelis and he had to have missile strength to offset the surface to air weapons which the Israelis had. Without these he would have no counter threat.

He said he was developing his own armament industry so that he would not be dependent on a foreign power for ammunition and planes. **He said his missiles were designed only for high explosives. He had sought without success to find something more powerful than TNT but he could not find anything between TNT and a nuclear warhead. His missiles could carry from one to two tons of TNT: his guidance system was a very simple one, non-electronic with a margin of error from one percent to five percent** and the largest missiles had a range of six hundred kilometers. They were comparable to an improved Victor 2, much less complicated and less expensive than the Redstone or the Honest John which he mentioned by name.

The **Soviets had given him a small experimental research reactor and a small electronic plant for the manufacture of devices which could be used as a means of supply for his military requirements.** He had no electronic industry as such. I gathered the electronic plant was not yet operational.

He then asked me how I envisaged the inspection system. I told him that I thought it would be a very simple unobtrusive plan whereby a few experts could make visits to the critical sites, say three or four people with no on-site installations such as we were talking about with the Russians. He replied that there would be nothing to inspect in the way of nuclear reactors in Egypt as he had none capable of producing nuclear war material. How did I envisage an inspection of the missiles? I told him I thought there would be some means of checking launchings both in Israel and the UAR with occasional visits to the launching areas but this was a matter for technical discussions. He repeated several times that I could report to the President that he had no intent or desire to manufacture nuclear material and he had no intention of attacking Israel.

I told him that I thought we would consider in return for his renunciation of the modern offensive weapons some assistance to him in the development of nuclear energy for non-military purposes and perhaps if he were interested, some assistance in space experiments but he seemed to show little interest in the latter. He said he thought his offhand reactions would be the same on Saturday as they were now but indicated that he would be glad to see me together with Badeau and Eilts on Saturday in case he or we had any further intermediate thoughts but that he would have to have more time than this for a more thoughtful reply. He indicated that he would prefer a visit after my Athens trip and if this were inconvenient for me he could communicate through Badeau after he had a chance to consult his advisers and give the matter his full consideration.

I intend to leave Monday morning, July 1, for Athens and can be reached through the Embassy there. After Saturday meeting I will give thought to advisability of next steps.

Badeau