

Foreign Relations, 1964-1968, Volume XIX, Arab-Israeli Crisis and War, 1967

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Prewar Crisis, May 15-June 4, 1967

1. President's Daily Brief

Washington, May 15, 1967.

[Source: Johnson Library, National Security File, NSC Histories, Middle East Crisis, Vol. 6, Appendix A. Top Secret; [codeword not declassified]. 1 page of source text not declassified.]

2. Telegram From the Embassy in Israel to the Department of State/1/

Tel Aviv, May 15, 1967, 1920Z.

/1/Source: National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1967-69, POL 32-1 ISR-SYR. Confidential; Immediate. Repeated Priority to Amman and to Baghdad, Damascus, Jidda, Beirut, Kuwait, Dhahran, London, USUN, CINCSRIKE, CINCEAFSA, Jerusalem, Aden, and Sanaa. Received at 5:14 p.m. Passed to the White House and USIA at 5:40 p.m.

3604. Ref: Cairo 7494./2/

/2/Telegram 7494 from Cairo, May 15, reported that UAR military forces had been placed on alert and that extensive movement of troops and materiel was in process. (Ibid.)

1. Bitan (Fon Off) advises Battle saw Harman this morning and expressed concern at reports Egyptian troop concentration in Canal area which blocked to normal traffic and interpreted development as **Egyptian demonstration solidarity with Syrians who apprehensive possible Israeli intentions.**/3/

/3/No memorandum of this conversation between Battle and Ambassador Harman has been found. Secretary Rusk told Battle that morning that "we should have a very frank talk with the Israelis" and that "it was very important for the Israelis to sit tight." (Notes of telephone conversation at 9:46 a.m. on May 15, prepared by Rusk's personal assistant Carolyn J. Proctor; *ibid.*, Rusk Files: Lot 72 D 192, Telephone Calls) Telegram 194189 to Tel Aviv, May 15, instructed the Embassy to approach the Israeli Government at the highest level and express the U.S. hope that the Israelis would "maintain steady nerves in interest avoiding serious deterioration area situation." (*Ibid.*, Central Files 1967-69, POL ARAB-ISR)

2. Bitan said that following talks with PM Eshkol and FM Eban he authorized give following GOI reaction this representation.

A. There no Israeli troop concentration Syrian, Egyptian or other frontier. (This corresponds with US Attaches reconnaissance to this hour.)

B. GOI hopes infiltration and sabotage will stop.

C. If there no further sabotage there no reason anyone to worry.

D. GOI interpretation Egyptian demonstration troop activities is that Syrians trying involve Egypt in Syrian-Israeli issue and if Egyptian concentration true Syrians could represent this as support.

3. GOI has no objection foregoing being transmitted to Cairo.

4. Situation with Syria is obviously precarious and, if additional serious sabotage incidents such as attacks on settlements, main roads etc. continue it impossible predict GOI will sit idly by without reacting. However, I believe GOI aware risks escalation, disposed make minimum effective response, and exercise what to them would seem maximum patience. I doubt that they will be very impressed in any event with Nasser's foot shuffling one way or the other.

Barbour