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CRITICAL INCIDENT NO. 14

SOME ASPECTS OF THE U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS, MAY - JUNE 1967 (U)

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PREFACE

(U) This study is not intended to be a complete account of the Middle East Crisis of 1967 or even of the U.S. role in that crisis. Rather it selects several aspects of the crisis for more detailed examination, while describing the general context within which these aspects appear.

(U) The crisis was different from previous crises studied in that the United States was not one of the protagonists, but essentially an on-looker. Nevertheless, U.S. relations with more than a dozen countries were involved, each episode representing an interesting story in itself. In order, however, to respond to the Joint Staff request for a short term study, it has been necessary to ignore or at best to mention only in passing many facets of the crisis deserving of deeper analysis.

(U) The work was conducted specifically under the terms of DJSM-752-67, dated 15 June 1967, and CM-2019-66, dated 23 December 1966, and is part of the continuing series of Critical Incident Studies conducted by the Weapons Systems Evaluation Group. This series of studies has been directed toward the improvement of the National Military Command System through intensive examination of the spectrum of military and political problems encountered in crises.

(U) Research on this study was conducted from June to November 1967. Because of the far-reaching nature of the crisis, an extensive body of research material was available. Sources used included message traffic, military and State Department; the NMCC Emergency Actions telephone tapes; interviews with senior personnel involved (including visits to interview Deputy CINCEUR and staff, CINCUSNAVEUR and staff,

and USCINCSTRIKE and staff); and other pertinent documentation. In addition, a WSEG team observed in the NMCC on a twenty-four hour basis during the war week.

(U) The security classification of paragraph content is based purely upon the classification of the original source material. Authority has not been sought to downgrade any classifications.

CONTENTS

All headings and footnotes in this document are UNCLASSIFIED unless otherwise noted

I. BACKGROUND

(U) For almost ten years after the liquidation of the Anglo-French-Israeli attack on Egypt in October 1956, a certain stability existed in the Arab-Israeli situation. That situation was certainly not one of peace, but the fact that there had been no fundamental or major changes seemed to indicate a general recognition among the protagonists that any such changes simply could not be effected. Furthermore, the traditional and interminable internecine quarrels among the Arab states prevented any apparently united front against Israel.

(U) Consequently, the attention of the world, and especially of the major powers, moved to other areas, and the Middle East continued to simmer. The simmering also involved a series of interlocked Arab disputes. Jordan and the UAR, basically hostile to each other, carried on a curious love-hate relationship; Jordan and Syria nourished a long term, low level antagonism, punctuated by spasms of higher intensity resulting from repeated border incidents; the UAR and Saudi Arabia were apparently at fundamental odds over the future status of Yemen and South Arabia and several times reached the brink of armed clashes between them in the course of the fighting there between Yemeni factions. On the potentially far more dangerous Arab-Israeli situation, Syrian terrorists had for years harassed Israeli border settlements.

(U) However, as between the strongest Arab state and leader of the Arab "front," the UAR, and Israel, a quite remarkable stability had been maintained during the decade. The presence of the United Nations Emergency Force of some 3400 men in the Gaza Strip area had provided an insulation between Egypt and Israel. Consequently, when 1967 opened, Israel felt more comfortable about the strongest of its

enemies. Premier Nasser, while always ready to exploit an opportunity to enhance his posture and prestige, had nevertheless shown few aggressive tendencies since the Lebanon episode of 1958, and was considered by the Israelis to be a realist, aware of what consequences might flow from an effort to upset UAR-Israeli stability.

(U) The first serious breach in the stability of that situation came on November 13, 1966 when Israel, provoked by persistent Syrian terrorist attacks, unaccountably launched a sharp heavy counterblow against Jordan. The attack on the village of Samu produced heavy Jordanian casualties and led to a condemnation of Israeli action by the U.N. The blow apparently seriously shook Jordanian confidence in the long term peaceful intentions of Israel and raised fears as to whether or not the Israeli objective was the overthrow of King Hussein's regime. In any event, the episode tended to drive Hussein closer to his long term antagonist, Nasser.

(S) [redacted]

[1] Amemb Jidda to SecState, 161014Z May 1967, SECRET.

II. DEVELOPMENT OF THE CRISIS

(U) Despite the tension along the Israeli-Syrian border, the outbreak of the 1967 Middle East Crisis was dramatically sudden. The Israeli press reported on 12 May that some Israeli leaders were in favor of the use of force against Syria to stop the rising tide of incidents which an Israeli complaint to the U.N. Security Council the week before seemed unlikely to do. Rumors of Israeli actions against Syria circulated in Tel Aviv from the 7th on. The delicacy of the situation was reflected in the decision by the U.S., the U.K., and the U.N. to boycott the Israeli twentieth anniversary independence day parade through Jerusalem. Something more was required, however, to provide the sudden catalytic action of the next few days.

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[2]Amemb Tel Aviv to State, 221545Z May 1967, SECRET.
[3]Amemb Cairo to State, 230925Z May 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.

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(∅) If indeed a Soviet intelligence report had been responsible, the most interesting question would be whether or not the Soviets were the victims of incorrect intelligence or whether they deliberately planted false information. As of the time of writing, this whole mystery remains unsolved.

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[1] , CONFIDENTIAL.] A-3

[2]Amemb Damascus to State, 151026Z May 1967, SECRET.

[3]Amemb Cairo to State, 150731Z May 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.

(U) With these two messages, the Middle East crisis began for the U.S. Government. For the next three weeks the U.S. would be feverishly engaged in three main lines of activity:

1. To ascertain the intentions of the protagonists, especially the role of the Soviets.
2. To counsel restraint and thus prevent the irrevocable step of the outbreak of hostilities.
3. To develop both a U.S. policy to fit the situation and the military plans and preparations necessary to support a range of alternatives.

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[1]USDAO Cairo to DIA, 150940Z May 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.
[2]State to Amemb Tel Aviv, 150723Z May 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.

[redacted]

(U) May 15 was Israel Independence Day, but speeches by government officials were moderate and the U.S. had hopes that things might be kept under control. However a change began to set in by the following day. The USDAO in Tel Aviv reported that the increasing Egyptian activity was causing the Israelis to take certain minimal precautionary steps. While they did not wish to increase tension, they could no longer disregard UAR activity.

(U) The 17th brought an even more profound change. An FBIS report stated that at 1400Z Cairo Radio had announced that the UAR Military Command had requested that the UNEF be withdrawn from the border and concentrated in the Gaza Strip. This, the gravest action so far, greatly disturbed the U.S., but the State Department still felt war was unlikely.

(C) [redacted]

(U) By the end of the day, however, the crisis mushroomed. At 2230Z the Secretary General of the U.N. informed the UAR U.N. representative that if the UNEF were in any way curtailed in its operation, the force would be completely withdrawn. At 1700Z on the 18th the UAR asked for the termination of UNEF and its total withdrawal from UAR territory. The Secretary-General informed the UAR late on the 19th

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[1]State to Amemb Cairo, 151413Z May 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.
[2]Amemb Sanaa to State, 170915Z May 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.

that the UN would comply. The reasons for this extraordinary move were much speculated upon then and later, and a lengthy report by the Secretary-General did not fully clarify the issue. Based upon information from many sources, Arab, non-aligned, and European, it would appear that Nasser did not really desire the total withdrawal of UNEF. However, the Secretary-General's insistence on an all-or-nothing position left Nasser no choice but to request complete withdrawal of the force. The Israelis themselves viewed the event in this light.

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(U) By the 19th the moderate Arab states like Lebanon, Tunisia, Morocco, and Kuwait were being caught in a dilemma. The Egyptian and Syrian moves against the common enemy required appropriate steps to demonstrate solidarity and Arabism, and so the momentum of the crisis was increased.

(U) On the 19th the UNEF patrols ceased and the troops from the nine member countries withdrew to base camps in the Gaza Strip.

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[1]State Circular Telegram, 171705Z May 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.
[2]Amemb Tel Aviv to State, 191140Z May 1967, SECRET.

(U) On the 20th Egypt declared a state of emergency in the Gaza Strip. Along with eleven other Arab states (even Saudi Arabian officials had warned the U.S. Ambassador that Saudi Arabia would be compelled to join Nasser) the UAR declared a united front against Israel. Iraqi and Syrian leaders announced in public that the time had come to destroy Israel. The U.N. Secretary-General announced he would fly to Cairo on the 22nd, and reported to the U.N. that the Middle East Crisis was now the most serious since 1956.

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[1]Amemb Cairo to State, 200957Z May 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.
[2]Amemb Baghdad to State, 201215Z May 1967, SECRET.

[redacted]

(U) Throughout the 21st tension grew as the UAR called for the mobilization of reserves, and the leader of the Palestine Liberation Army announced that new raids into Israel would be carried out.

[redacted]

(U) Nasser did make the announcement publicly that day, and coming as it did on the day the U.N. Secretary-General arrived, it seemed to indicate a coldly calculated intent. Simultaneously,

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[1]Amemb Cairo to State, 201345Z May 1967, SECRET.
[2]Amemb Tel Aviv to State, 210001Z May 1967, SECRET.
[3]State to Amemb Cairo, 221458Z May 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.

Egyptian forces moved to Sharm-el Sheikh, controlling the Strait of Tiran, and began to fortify the position.

(S) [redacted]

INITIAL U.S. REACTIONS

(U) The U.S. on the 22nd issued a formal policy statement, recalling the Anglo-French-American Tripartite commitment of May 25, 1950 against the violation of frontiers in the Middle East. However, the reliance on the 1950 pledge was rather weak. In view of the 1956 Suez War and the vast changes in power relationships since 1950, little credence was placed in the Tripartite pledge among the countries most intimately involved in the area, even though the U.S. may have still considered itself bound to the pledge.

(U) Following the Cairo announcement, the President made a personal statement on the issue. He stated that the U.S. considered the Gulf of Aqaba to be an international waterway, and that we felt that a blockage of Israeli shipping was illegal and potentially disastrous to the cause of peace. The right of free innocent passage of the international waterway was a vital interest of the international community.

(U) The President reminded the leaders of all nations of the Middle East what three Presidents had said before him -- that the U.S. was firmly committed to the support of the political independence and territorial integrity of all nations of the area.[2]

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[1]Amemb Paris, 020918Z June 1967, SECRET.

[2]New York Times, 24 May 1967.

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(U) As an indication of the seriousness with which the U.S. saw the Egyptian step, at 1719Z on the 22nd, immediately following Nasser's formal announcement of the blockade, State sent a circular telegram to all posts to advise U.S. citizens abroad not to travel to the UAR, Jordan, Syria and Israel, and, if in those countries, to leave immediately unless on essential business.

(Ø) Within the hour State also queried all U.S. Embassies in the area on their views on activating emergency and evacuation plans and on evacuation of official dependents. The Embassy in Cairo replied the next morning that it had already invoked the warning phase of its E&E plan, but did not feel it necessary yet to evacuate official dependents. The situation, it was recognized, could drastically change within seventy-two hours.[2]

(U) The travel ban had been weighed carefully. The U.S. had had to balance the realization that the announcement could have adverse political effects against the very genuine concern for the safety of the some 30,000 Americans in the area. In view of the rising danger, the decision was ultimately based on the latter consideration.

(U) The Embassies themselves were also in a difficult position in regard to evacuation. They were reluctant to make even overt preparations for evacuation, since if the Israelis should attack, any evacuation preparations could be seen as proof of American foreknowledge of the attack. In Syria, for example, not even the luggage of dependents was packed for fear of raising the suspicions of servants.

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[1]State to Amemb Cairo, 221857Z May 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.
[2]Amemb Cairo to State, 230850Z May 1967, SECRET.

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III. THE SEARCH FOR AN AMERICAN POSITION

(S) In the evening of the 22nd, State sent a cable to the Embassies in Moscow and Cairo, summing up the situation as seen from Washington. The events of the last few days, State said, were difficult to assess. Nasser's mobilization and the removal of the UNEF were initially believed by State to be political ploys designed to: (1) increase Nasser's prestige in the Arab world by requiring all the Arab states to follow his lead in regard to Israel; (2) recoup his waning fortunes in the international community, especially with the nonaligned countries; (3) show the U.S. that he had the capability to damage U.S. interests and was thus still a power to be reckoned with, possibly hoping such might lead to more U.S. economic assistance.

(S) While State always recognized the possibility that Nasser intended running the risk of a major war, it was generally doubted that he wished to go that far if it would be avoided and his objectives obtained without full scale conflict. Closing the Strait of Tiran, however, represented so drastic a step as to challenge the foregoing assumptions and to raise serious doubts as to whether Nasser's willingness to risk war was not much greater than had been assumed. It also raised serious doubts whether he had become even more reckless than usual or, alternatively, had been assured of Russian support, possibly in an exercise related in some way to the U.S. involvement in Vietnam. The Department could only wonder whether both Moscow and Cairo were fully aware of U.S. commitments to oppose aggression in all forms. We also wondered whether these two countries, with full knowledge of U.S. commitments, had any doubt of U.S. determination to proceed with action supporting these commitments both inside the U.N. and outside.

(S) As to the closing of the Gulf, the cable continued, any

UAR effort to deny free passage to the ships of all nations could only lead to disastrous consequences.

(S) Every effort had been made to avoid a public outcry or reaffirmation publicly of U.S. commitments. State had thought that the varied approaches through many channels over recent days would have left no doubt of U.S. commitments and U.S. determination to back these up. We must assure ourselves, the cable concluded, that these governments were fully aware of this. The comment of the Embassies and their views as to the need of firmer U.S. statements was requested.[1]

(S) These commitments tended to be both generalized and specific and therefore problematical. In a sense the U.S. was a prisoner of multiple and contradictory commitments. For example, the Embassy in Amman reported a conversation with King Hussein on the 18th in which the King wanted to know what the U.S. would do if Israel attacked Jordan. He said he had been assured "on countless occasions" by U.S. officials, and that, indeed, during his last visit to Washington he had been told Jordan did not need additional armament because the Sixth Fleet would protect him.[2]

(U) On the other hand U.S. commitments and international commitments had been made to Israel in early 1957 as part of the settlement of the Suez war. The dilemma arose from the possibility that Israel, in defense of the rights it felt were guaranteed in 1957, or to forestall an Arab attack, would attack Jordan first.

(U) The prime necessity, therefore, was for the U.S. to prevent the outbreak of hostilities wherein both parties might present due bills. The danger of war had now been greatly increased, and a reflection of Israeli views was sent by the Embassy in Tel Aviv

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[1] State to Amembs Moscow, Cairo, 222136Z May 1967, SECRET.
[2] Amemb Amman to State, 181505Z May 1967, CONFIDENTIAL

on the 23rd. The current feeling there was that if Israel failed to react to the blockade with a military move, if and when her ships were held up, and if she should not find sufficient political guarantees, then Nasser would have won a great victory which would serve to increase terrorism and pressure. On the other hand, if Israel reacted militarily, she would be adjudged the aggressor and Nasser could probably count on Soviet support as well as that of the U.N. Security Council to stop Israeli operations. Given in 1957 American pressure on Israel to retreat from its newly won control of Sharm-el-Sheikh, was the U.S. now prepared to approve, or at least not interfere with, any Israeli major operation intended to ensure freedom of transit of the Strait? Israel, the Embassy felt, must appreciate these factors and act fast.[1]

(U) The President on the 23rd, therefore, had made his appeal to Cairo to avoid implementation of the blockade. In his formal statement the President deplored the blockade, the failure of the truce agreements, the hasty withdrawal of the UNEF, and the military buildup on both sides.

(U) The U.S. was still relying on international measures to damp down the crisis, supported by the U.K. and France. Both of the latter stressed diplomatic initiatives and emphasized Moscow's role. The French Ambassador proposed to Mr. Rostow a meeting of the Big Four U.N. Ambassadors, but the U.S. had not been able to get Soviet participation.[2] The U.S. in turn offered at the Security Council meeting to work directly with Britain, France and the Soviet Union to eliminate the threat to peace.

(S) State in a message to the Embassies in London, Paris, and Moscow during the 24th pointed out that the problem of agreement

[1]Amemb Tel Aviv to State, 231515Z May 1967, UNCLASSIFIED.

[2]There was some talk in NATO of the establishment of a Working Group on the Middle East, and Ambassador Cleveland was sent on the 23rd a full statement of the U.S. position, expectations, and assessments for use at the North Atlantic Council.

was the key. The French proposal had said that no one should make the situation worse. Did that mean the Israelis should refrain from challenging the blockade or that the Arabs should desist from enforcing their claims? The cable revealed that the U.S. had taken the very grave responsibility that day of asking Israel to refrain from sending a ship down the Gulf of Aqaba. However, this was not a position which could be held indefinitely. The Israelis, it was felt, might well have been moved to strike yesterday had it not been for U.S. intervention. It was recognized that they would not hold off long unless Cairo gave assurances that it would not exercise its claim. Any number of formulas could be found, the cable concluded, but the basic point was that there was no way to compromise on free passage through the Strait.[1]

A. ESTIMATING SOVIET POLICY

(U) The great question mark for the U.S. was that of Soviet intentions. With Soviet cooperation, the crisis could be controlled; without it, the consequences were unfathomable. Were the Soviets actively or passively supporting Nasser and how far would that support extend in the political and military realms?

(U) There were reports at around this time, apparently well founded, of high level communication on the crisis. The President on the 22nd was reported to have sent a personal message to Kosygin.

(S) State had sent a summary of an initial INR assessment to Moscow, Paris and London on the 19th, the first of an exchange of messages on probable Soviet actions. INR pointed out that in past such disputes Moscow was usually reluctant to abandon a posture of support for its clients, and had tried to squeeze the last drop of advantage, though always being careful not to go beyond the point of danger. Since Moscow's threshold of danger in the Middle East was at a higher level than ours, "Soviet policy always smacked of

[1]State to USUN, Amembs London, Paris, Moscow, 241913Z May 1967, SECRET.

brinksmanship." In the present case, evidences of Soviet reactions so far were meager but followed the established patterns. The Soviets accused Israel of provoking the crisis and the U.S. of encouraging her.

(S) INR did not feel the Soviets were likely to promote hostilities in the Middle East as a means of exerting pressure on the U.S. over Vietnam. A conflict in the Middle East would be difficult to control and the purely military prospects of the Arabs were not encouraging. However, the Vietnam situation may have made the Soviets more reluctant to join the U.S. in any peace efforts. State felt the Soviets would prefer either the Western powers on the U.N. Security Council to deal with the problem with minimal Soviet participation.

(S) If fighting broke out, the Soviets would be under pressure to move in different directions simultaneously. They would want steps taken to get the conflict under control, especially by the Security Council, but they would not wish to offend the Arabs and would probably abstain in the Security Council voting, thus allowing peace moves to go ahead without Soviet participation. At the same time, the Soviets would be tempted to provide minimal support, diplomatic and material, to the Arabs so as to preserve their relationship with Damascus and Cairo. It was not clear how far they would go in continuing their regular deliveries of military equipment under conditions of actual war.[1]

(S) This, of course, was a "preblockade" assessment, made when the crisis was still at an essentially low level. On the 22nd, the day Nasser announced the blockade of the Strait, the Soviets notified Turkey that ten Soviet warships were to sail from the Black Sea through the Dardanelles. This was the first unmistakable Soviet signal.

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[1]State to Amembs Moscow, Paris, London, USUN, 191245Z May 1967, SECRET.

(S) A more ominous assessment came from Ambassador Thompson in Moscow to accompany them. He began his note by saying that he was troubled by the thought that the Soviets, smarting under their inability to do very much about our increased bombing of North Vietnam, may not be averse to a crisis in the Middle East at this time. If they had reached the conclusion that there was no limit to our actions against North Vietnam, they might consider that a serious Middle East crisis would at least cause us to level off our air action in Southeast Asia. The Soviets could probably stay clear of any actual military involvement in the Middle East, while making threatening noises for which they could take credit with the Arabs in the U.N. for having stepped in and stopped any conflict. This would be far less dangerous to them than, for example, stirring up another Berlin crisis. Given the attitudes of the present Syrian and UAR governments, the Soviets would probably not have to take any positive action in order to get a crisis going, but simply be mild in their cautions.

(S) Thompson continued that while he did not necessarily subscribe to the foregoing hypothesis, it appeared consistent with what we knew of Soviet actions or lack of action on the Middle East.[1]

(U) Thompson's assessment took the darkest view and one, it had to be admitted, which seemed to be supported by Soviet attitudes and actions thus far. However, Ambassador Goldberg at the U.N. met with Soviet representatives on the same day, and left the meeting feeling that there was not as yet any firm Soviet position on the crisis.

(S) [redacted]

[1]Amemb Moscow to State, 231430Z May 1967, SECRET.

1. Nasser's announcement had raised again the question of what the Soviets intended to do. The answer thus far seemed to be.... as little as possible.

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we had had no indication of positive Soviet effort to urge restraint on the Arabs,

3. Soviet support for the Arabs so far had not been without circumspection. The 23 May Soviet statement provided generalized Soviet support for the Arabs and, like earlier Soviet propaganda, played the Arab side of the story, but without committing the Soviets to any specific courses of action.

4. We had noted Arab broadcasts which appeared to have exaggerated Soviet statements of support. While some evidence existed that the Arabs may be overstating Soviet support in their propaganda -- and perhaps to themselves -- we had no evidence of any Soviet effort to disabuse them.

5. The Moscow line toward Israel conformed to the general posture of letting events take their course.

6. At present Moscow seemed to see no need to expend diplomatic capital in order to secure a reduction in Arab pressures on Israel. Moscow apparently believed it could allow the U.S. to bear the onus among the Arabs for efforts to avert a war, and that such a U.S. involvement would add to the problems the U.S. already had in connection with Vietnam.

7. Moscow might not have been greatly perturbed by Nasser's latest move, and might even view a possible Israeli attack on Egypt as manageable. For as long as the Soviets could count on Israeli restraint and U.S. and other great power pressure on Israel, they might expect military action to be limited. An Israeli defeat would redound to Soviet

advantage, and in the long run even an Israeli victory might end in a situation where Nasser was beholden to the Soviets for diplomatic efforts to bail him out, while Arab frustrations would advance Soviet objectives in reducing Western influence in the area.

8. Despite such calculations, however, INR thought that Moscow would nevertheless prefer the crisis to blow over without military action and all the accompanying imponderables. For while losses would be greater for Nasser than for Moscow, a military defeat for the UAR would still be a considerable embarrassment for the Soviets too.

9. However, in this situation, the Soviets didn't feel compelled to take any drastic action to head off the crisis. The Soviets seemed to feel they could afford to continue to support Nasser while he took his chances. They could derive the political advantages of backing the Arabs while counting on others to keep the crisis controlled. They seemed to see themselves as possible gainers at U.S. expense in the Arab world as well as in the U.N., where they might see an incidental opportunity to restructure at least one peace-keeping operation along lines more to their taste.

10. Lastly, INR stated that there so far was nothing in the Soviet military posture which could be identified as clearly related to the crisis, much less as evidence of any Soviet planning for involving itself directly.[1]

(U) On the 24th the Soviet Government issued a statement, charging that Israeli actions presupposed direct or indirect encouragement on the part of "certain imperialist circles which aspired to bring back colonial oppression to the lands of the Arabs." "None," the statement continued, "should doubt that anyone proceeding to unleash aggression in the Near East region would

[1]State to Amembs Moscow, London, Paris, Cairo, Tel Aviv, Damascus, 231703Z May 1967, SECRET.

encounter not only the united force of the Arab countries but also the resolute opposition to their aggression on the part of the Soviet Union and all peace-loving states."[1]

(U) Thompson remained concerned over the ambiguity, intentional or otherwise, of Soviet policy. The following day he reported on the varied Soviet press treatment of the crisis. One line taken blamed the U.S. for the crisis and warned that whoever unleashed conflict would face the decisive counteraction of the USSR. At the same time, another line said that only imperialists and oil monopolists were interested in a Middle East war and that the Soviets would do everything to prevent a disturbance of the peace and the security of the Middle East.

(S) Thompson questioned which of these two lines the Soviets were privately pushing with the Arabs. For unless accompanied by cautions, Soviet statements could be read by the Arabs as justification, if not support, for their course of action. To put it in the most charitable light, the main purpose was to earn for the Soviets the credit for coming squarely to the Arab side, and assuming war were averted, to put it in a position to claim that by its bold warning to Israel and the U.S. alike, it had helped restrain conflict. Although Soviet statements declared Soviet interest in maintaining peace, they did not detract from the main purpose of currying the favor of the Arabs by an appeal to both sides for restraint.[2]

(U) Thus by the 24th the U.S. faced a policy dilemma. The three cardinal assumptions on which much of its Middle East policy had been based had been undercut within a week. Until the crisis began, the U.S. had believed Nasser preferred the UNEF presence as a buffer. We had also believed he would not go to the brink of risking war, and so for the first few days had tended to look on the

[1] New York Times, 25 May 1967.
[2] Amemb Moscow to State, 240726Z May 1967, SECRET.

situation as just another chapter in an apparently endless story.[1] The third assumption was that the Soviet Union shared the U.S. desire for peace, and would cooperate in maintaining peace. This belief was now in doubt. While the Soviets had not publicly and specifically approved of the Tiran blockade, the decisive move in the whole crisis, they seemed to be fending off the numerous suggestions for an international effort to cool the crisis.

B. INITIAL U.S. MILITARY ACTIONS

(U) U.S. military forces in the Middle East were almost entirely naval, with the exception of some Air Force units on training tours at Wheelus AB in Libya, and at Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. In the Mediterranean was the U.S. Sixth Fleet, under CINCUSNAVEUR for U.S. purposes and also acting as NATO Strike Force South. The Fleet was composed of two carrier groups and an amphibious group carrying a battalion landing team (BLT) (minus one company) of Marines. Operating South of Suez was the Middle East Force, consisting of a converted seaplane tender and two destroyers. This force reported to USCINCSTRIKE/MEAFSA. On 24 May the tender and one destroyer were in the Red Sea, the other destroyer was near Madagascar.

(S) On the afternoon of 20 May, as a result of a phone conversation between USEUCOM and USNAVEUR, the latter sent instructions to the Sixth Fleet. Carrier Task Group 60.2 (the carrier SARATOGA and escorts) was to move eastward at twenty-five knots to an area generally east of Crete. Ships currently in port were not to be sailed in response to this message. The political situation was such that no overt Sixth Fleet action was appropriate. CTG 60.2 was warned to keep clear of the Soviet ships in the Mediterranean as feasible.[2]

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[1] Nor was it any simpler for the U.S. to understand what was happening within the Arab camp itself. On 21 May a Syrian car, obviously rigged as a huge bomb, crossed the border into Jordan and was blown up, killing seventeen Jordanians. Relations between Jordan and Syria had been strained as it was, and consequently the outrage led Hussein to break off relations with Syria on the 23rd. It seemed an unusual thing for the Syrians to do just at at time when the Arabs were trying to compose a united front.

[2] CINCUSNAVEUR to COMSIXTHFLT, 201610Z May 1967, SECRET.

(S) A few hours later CINCEUR called NAVEUR, confirming the earlier phone conversation, and pending receipt of JCS instructions, stating approval of the actions initiated by NAVEUR. The message stated that guidance received thus far from the JCS indicated a desire carefully to move the focus of the Fleet closer to the scene of the Middle East confrontation. While no immediate action was indicated for the amphibious force, CINCEUR deemed it prudent to put the phibron on notice to be prepared to pull out on relatively short notice. NAVEUR was warned to handle all actions as quietly as possible. No port visits were to be terminated or cancelled unless further events so dictated.[1]

(S) Transmitting this information to the Sixth Fleet, NAVEUR stressed that there must be no unduly intrusive action by U.S. forces. It was important that there be no obvious disruption of the normal activities of the Fleet such as unscheduled sorties from liberty ports. Unless instructions to the contrary were received, it was intended to carry out a combined exercise with the Spanish. There was no indication, NAVEUR also reported, of any untoward Soviet activity in the Mediterranean or elsewhere.[2]

(S) However, within a week a new tone prevailed. On the 27th the JCS replied to a NAVEUR request, with which CINCEUR had concurred, that TG 60.2 be permitted to visit Greek ports for a five-day upkeep period to be followed by TG 60.1. NAVEUR had also requested that the advance base airfield at Souda Bay, Crete, be activated. The JCS response stated that in order to respond to possible contingencies, it was desired for the moment to maintain TG 60 intact at sea. Concurrence was given the proposal regarding Souda Bay.[3]

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[1]CINCEUR to CINCUSNAVEUR, 202150Z May 1967, SECRET.
[2]CINCUSNAVEUR to COMSIXTHFLT, 202300Z May 1967, SECRET.
[3]JCS 6481 to CINCEUR, 271634Z May 1967, SECRET.

(S) High level interest in operational details of the situation also began to grow. Beginning on the 22nd the NMCC was directed to send a daily memorandum to the White House Situation Room with DIA reports of all merchant ships within twenty-four, forty-eight, and seventy-two hours of Israeli Mediterranean ports and the Gulf of Aqaba. The status of U.S. naval forces in the Mediterranean and Red Sea was included.

C. THE USS INTREPID

(S) The INTREPID incident caused a considerable amount of concern at this time. The carrier was moving east through the Mediterranean for transit of the Suez Canal, en route to Southeast Asia, just as the crisis suddenly took on its grave dimensions. The USDAO in Cairo warned NAVEUR on the 22nd of the factors involved in the INTREPID's transit of the Canal: (1) the possibility existed of the carrier's being trapped in the Canal should hostilities erupt; (2) the Israelis were capable of closing the Canal as a riposte to the UAR blockade and a closing of the Canal would be the surest way of obtaining international intervention into the crisis; (3) despite past transits of the INTREPID to and from Vietnam, the UAR could interpret the transit as an imperialist plot to place military capability in the Red Sea area. Consequently, he suggested the Canal Authority be informed no later than the 24th that the carrier would pass through on the 26th en route to the Far East.[1]

(S) A CNO instruction to USDAO of the next day to inform the Canal Authority of the pending passage was cancelled, and NAVEUR on the 24th instructed the Sixth Fleet to direct the INTREPID and her plane guard to an area seventy-five miles southwest of Crete. The intention was to keep the vessel within twenty-four hours steaming time from Port Said until further information could be received from Washington.[2] It was also intended to keep the movement of the INTREPID divorced from the regular operations of the Sixth Fleet.[3]

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[1]USDAO Cairo to CINCUSNAVEUR, 221410Z May 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.
[2]CINCUSNAVEUR to COMSIXTHFLT, 240835Z May 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.
[3]CINCUSNAVUER to COMSIXTHFLT, 241442Z May 1967, SECRET.

(C) JCS guidance to CINCEUR came on the 24th and directed that the vessel proceed to and operate in an area which would allow her to reach Port Said as previously scheduled. She was to remain outside an arc whose radius was 240 miles from Port Said, and to remain north of 33°N latitude.[1]

(C) For five days, while broader policy issues were being debated in Washington, it remained unclear as to whether or not the INTREPID would transit the Canal. As a possible alternative, fueling arrangements were investigated with the Royal Navy in the event the ship was to be rerouted around the Cape of Good Hope. Finally, late on the 29th, reflecting what appeared in Washington to be a reduced level of tension in the area, the JCS directed CINCEUR to move the ship through the Canal, with her destination indicated as the Indian Ocean.[2]

(U) Just after this it was learned that it was customary to give a minimum notice of forty-eight hours to the Canal Authority of intention to transit a warship. There was a certain amount of concern before it was established that this was only a custom and not mandatory, and the U.S. desired to maintain the maximum freedom of action under the prevailing circumstances. However, when the American Consul at Port Said ultimately was directed to request on the 30th that the carrier be allowed to join the southbound evening convoy on 31 May, it was approved by the Egyptians, and the transit was made without incident.

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[1]JCS 6152 to CINCEUR, 241932Z May 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.
[2]JCS 6600 to CINCEUR, 292348Z May 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.

IV. THE BRITISH INITIATIVE

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(U) On the morning of the 24th Prime Minister Wilson made a statement to the Commons in which he said that Britain would assert the right of all British shipping to use the Strait of Tiran, and that she was prepared to join with others to secure general recognition of this right. He recalled the British statement of 1 March 1957, affirming this position, made during the settlement of the Suez war.[1]

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[1] New York Times, 25 May 1967.

[redacted]

(d) [redacted]

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[1] J-5, Background Paper for Talks with the British, no date, CONFIDENTIAL.

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A. AMERICAN CONSIDERATION OF THE BRITISH PROPOSAL

(S) [redacted]

[1]The record of these discussions has been reconstructed from three memoranda for the record by the J-5 representative and two other unidentified U.S. representatives. All three were written May 24 or 25. Personal recollections of two of the participants were also valuable.

(S) The SecDef, after hearing a report from Hoopes, the senior DoD representative present, had directed that some sort of contingency plan be prepared within a week. A hasty effort, described later, was undertaken by the Joint Staff on the night of the 24th in preparation for the possible meeting the next day.

(TS)

(U) The events of the day and their meaning were carefully summed up for the SecDef the following day in a significant memorandum from Hoopes. Hoopes stated that his purpose was to present his assessment of the choices the U.S. faced. His memorandum is described in detail since it superbly laid out the issues of the crisis.

(S) Starting from the strong Presidential statement of the 23rd, Hoopes began, regarding the international character of the Gulf of Aqaba, and our avowed assurances to the Israelis (which amounted cumulatively to a rather strong commitment to preserve Israeli national and territorial integrity), he believed the U.S. choices were three:

1. To put the U.S. and U.K. out front. [redacted]

2. To put Israel out front. No multinational declaration would be involved. We would stand on the two strong statements of the President and Prime Minister Wilson, and would welcome other similar statements. The point, however, would be to avoid the appearance of an anti-Arab club which hurt the Western position in 1956. [redacted] However, rather than exclude Israeli participation, the key point of Course 2 would be to have an Israeli ship, escorted by an Israeli patrol boat, test the passage of the Strait. This test would be backed up by the U.S. and U.K. declarations and by the ostentatious U.S./U.K. naval deployments.

(S) There was, Hoopes pointed out, a partial analog here to the Taiwan Straits in 1958. U.S. air and sea forces had been on the scene there and ready to help out, but the resupply effort had been carried out by the Chinese Nationalists in order to avoid (or at least defer) a U.S.-ChiCom confrontation. U.S. power had provided an unassailable backdrop but had remained uncommitted and thus flexible.

3. To undertake no concerted action with the U.K. or others. This course would forego the idea of concerted U.S./U.K. military planning and combined deployments. It would give the Israelis the discretion to test the passage alone and on their own time scale, but we (and presumably the U.K.) would be prepared to support them politically and by military resupply in the event of hostilities.

(S) An imperative accompaniment to each of these three possible courses would be a proposed political deal. Required was some formula which Nasser could accept without loss of face, but which would at the same time assure free passage and provide general assurance against further Israel-UAR border tensions that would threaten war. Elements discussed by the Senior Control Group[1] the previous night included:

a. Acceptance by Israel of U.N. personnel on Israeli soil.

b. Demilitarization of the entire Gulf, including the Strait (which would have the effect of denying the Israelis their small naval facilities at Eilat and the Jordanians their equally small facility at Aqaba).

c. A small U.N. sea patrol in the Strait to protect UAR sovereignty and to assure free passage.

(S) Hoopes then proceeded to analyze the respective courses of action. [redacted] An irrational Nasser,

[1]The senior U.S. crisis management body. See Section VI on the organizational structure for the crisis.

[redacted]

faced with the choice of backing down or shooting, might shoot. The U.S. would thus be initially and directly engaged in a war with the UAR. What our aims would be in such circumstances and how we would break off the fighting would be excruciating questions. It would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to obtain Soviet cooperation to damp down the fighting and get a settlement if the U.S. were a belligerent. Engagement of U.S. forces against the Arabs would eliminate U.S. influence in the Arab world and further erode it in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

[(S) [

] Since 1949 we had worked for stability through assurances in regard to the territorial integrity of both sides, and for balance through judicious military assistance and military sales. We had tried to promote legitimate self-defense. We had been very interested in assuring (not necessarily from U.S. sources) sufficient Israeli strength to deter Arab attack or to prevail in the event of war. But we had been reluctant to intervene with U.S. combat forces.

(S) Course 2 would be far more in keeping, Hoopes felt, with our military position as regards the Middle East and would leave us a far wider range of choices, both political and military. If Israeli passage of the Gulf were challenged militarily by the UAR, Israeli forces would be in the forefront. It remained the authoritative view of the JCS that Israel could probably quickly defeat any likely combination of Arab enemies. Thus, even in event of a major war, Course 2 would provide us a much better chance of keeping U.S. military forces out of the conflict, and this, in Hoopes' judgment, would be of vital importance in obtaining Soviet and U.N. support to limit and terminate hostilities. [

[redacted]

(S) Course 3 was similar to Course 2 but involved less specific U.S. military support of Israel. [

] On the other hand Course 3 would be less desirable for the Israelis and accordingly might buy us less time than either Courses 1 or 2.

[(S) [

(S) Hoopes declared his support of Course 2. It would permit us to take the same stand behind international law regarding free passage,[

] But it would put Israeli military power into the breach ahead of our own, leaving us a wider choice with respect to engagement in the light of the developing situation. The fact of our non-engagement would be crucial, Hoopes stressed, if the situation were to require Soviet and U.N. support of efforts to limit and terminate hostilities. If we were militarily engaged, it might be extremely difficult for the Soviets to avoid a similar engagement on behalf of the UAR and Syria. The military foundations of Course 2 were very strong. They would consist of Israeli military superiority over the Arabs,[

] the U.S., U.K. and possibly other national declarations in behalf of free passage. Hoopes admitted that this was perhaps a weaker deterrent than provided for in Course 1, but the consequences would be more manageable if deterrence failed.

(S) Course 3 probably provided insufficiently explicit support for the right of free passage, and it could create Israeli doubts as

to our intentions. This might make Israel more intransigent and less willing to coordinate its policy with us. Thus, Course 3 might be too ambiguous to reinforce the Israeli deterrent and too weak to restrain Israel from a preemptive attack.[1]

(S) This thorough and penetrating analysis had come down hard on the side of caution and restraint. A similar tone also came from the military.

(TS) An overnight evaluation of the British plan by the Joint Staff produced on the 25th recommendations in JCS 1887/712, "Memorandum by the J-5 for the JCS on U.S. military actions regarding the UAR blockade of the Straits of Tiran," which the Joint Chiefs later approved at a meeting on the 27th. The study, in response to the Thomson visit, proposed an outline U.S. plan in order to be prepared for possible U.S. action, in concert with the U.K. or unilaterally.

(TS)

(TS) The contingency outline plan which the JCS then proposed also assumed that Arab-Israeli hostilities had not yet begun. The concept of operations was based upon two assumptions:

a. If any of the probes were to result in UAR hostile action the objective would be to confine the action to the immediate

[1]Memorandum for the SecDef from Townshend Hoopes, 1-23264/67, 25 May 1967, SECRET.

area of the international waters dispute in order to avoid escalation. This could be accomplished:

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b. If the probes were conducted without resulting in UAR attack, the task group could remain on station until the blockade were lifted. If the UAR at any time were to interfere with any ship entering the Straits, another transit by a merchant ship with a U.K. destroyer as escort should be scheduled. Possible scenarios were:

1. Run a merchant ship through the Straits alone.
2. Run a merchant ship through the Straits with a U.K. destroyer or escort.
3. Run another merchant ship through the Straits alone.
4. Transit a combatant vessel, U.K. destroyer or destroyer escort.

(~~TS~~) The JCS laid out four courses of action and described the constraints and risks associated with each.

(~~TS~~) Course 1 consisted of U.S. unilateral execution, only forces east of Suez being utilized in the Red Sea. However, any augmentation by U.S. naval vessels was not feasible before 20 June. The risk was that a force of only two destroyers jeopardized the survival of both ships.

(~~TS~~) Course 2 involved [ ], only forces east of Suez being utilized in the Red Sea. Augmentation of this force

could be accomplished in ten days by British destroyers, but by the U.S., not before 20 June. The problem here was that the force involved was not markedly increased over the force in Course 1. Therefore, the risks and probable damage were the same as in 1.

(TS) Course 3 called for U.S. unilateral execution, with forces east of Suez being used in the Red Sea and augmented from the Mediterranean. The problem here was that the force build up was dependent upon free transit of the Canal, transit which might be refused or delayed. [

] As to risk, the force employed would reduce the probability of ship losses appreciably, but would not be sufficient to overcome the UAR air threat.

(~~TS~~) Course 4 involved a [ ] force east of Suez being used in the Red Sea, augmented from the Mediterranean. This course was also dependent upon free transit and represented a slight increase in force capabilities over Course 3.

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(~~TS~~) In all four courses there was a general risk from UAR minefields.

(~~TS~~) The JCS then summarized the four courses:

1. Courses 1 and 2 involved the use of forces east of Suez, with U.S. forces only in the first case [ ] Courses 3 and 4 were rejected. The salient points with respect to these last two courses were:

   a. The possibility of blockage of the Canal through a purposeful "accident," thus jeopardizing forces in transit.

   b. The concept of a carrier operating in the restricted waters of the Red Sea with minimum protection against the UAR air threat was unsound.

c. The provocative character to the UAR of the transit of a cruiser, a destroyer, and a carrier into the area of the Straits under crisis conditions.

d. The probability of Israeli reaction and subsequent escalation of UAR/U.S. incidents.

e. In addition, all the disadvantages of Course 2, except as stated below, pertained.

2. The remaining Courses, 1 and 2, could be accomplished within the time available; however, Course 1 involved the undesirable choice of a unilateral and weaker force.

3. On the basis of this rationale, the Chiefs concluded that Course 2 offered the best choice of success and involved fewer risks. Nevertheless, even with this course, serious disadvantages accrued.

a. There was a high probability that the probe force would be taken under attack by the UAR and that the escorted vessel or the destroyers might sustain damage. If this occurred, the U.S. would have three possible courses of action, all undesirable: continuance of the action, withdrawal of the probe force; escalation of the conflict with U.S., U.K., or Israeli air and naval support. This action would negate the purpose of the probe force, namely, to confine action to the area and issue of the international waters of the Straits.

b. The probe force would have limited self-defense capabilities in the face of the forces which the UAR could bring to bear in that area.

c. The probe force could remain in the operating area for approximately five days before refueling would be necessary. Diversion of an oiler to the area or rotation of the units to a suitable port would be required.

d. The Israelis might utilize the incident to attack the UAR or vice versa.

e. If the situation were to escalate, and U.S. air support of the probe force were to be required, the aircraft would have to overfly the UAR or Israel, with the attendant possibility of still further escalation.

(TS) The Joint Chiefs concluded this presentation with a firm warning. All courses of action considered entailed the risk of serious escalation into a full scale UAR-Israeli war or a U.S.-UAR confrontation. US action should not be undertaken unless the U.S. Government were prepared to respond appropriately.[1]

[(TS)[

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(S) The JCS followed up this memorandum four days later with another, considering in detail the use of additional U.S./U.K. air and naval forces that could be made available. JCSM 301-67 had considered only those actions which could be taken within approximately one week. The later paper stressed the JCS view that sufficient military forces could arrive in the objective area in thirty-one days from the Atlantic Fleet to provide a balanced U.S. force in the Red Sea. Nevertheless, the whole concept was dangerous operationally because it divided the U.S. forces in the Middle East Area. If a decision were to be made to conduct a probe in a time frame less than thirty-one days, the use of U.S./U.K. naval forces now east of Suez was the only course available. This force currently was sufficient to demonstrate U.S. intent, but its capability to prevail in event of attack by major UAR forces was doubtful. The JCS also felt that where deployment of an augmenting naval force was required, they felt that it should be deployed to augment the Sixth Fleet rather than the Red Sea.

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[1]JCSM-301-67, Memorandum for the SecDef, 27 May 1967, TOP SECRET.

(S) The paper proceeded to list in detail the sequence of possible probes, UAR hostile actions, and U.S./U.K. countermeasures. Possible military actions included interference by Soviet naval forces with U.S. forces in the Mediterranean.[1]

B. RESULTS OF THE BRITISH VISIT

(S) Despite the negative U.S. military reaction, there was support for the thrust of the British proposal. Rostow in his influential position was in favor of it. That it was being considered by the decision makers was indicated by a State memorandum for the President, suggesting points for discussion with Prime Minister Pearson of Canada during the President's visit there on the 26th. The U.S. position, the memorandum stated, was that if a U.N. patrol proposal were to fail, we were actively considering a U.K. proposal for a multinational naval presence to enforce international maritime rights. Such a force, it was thought, would deter the UAR from enforcing its claim. Assurance of U.S. interest in such a plan should also deter Israel from striking now, before the U.N. proceedings had run their course. This assurance of our interest was the most likely base on which we could hold the situation for a month or so. However, the assurance of interest should be tentative, subject to Congressional approval and the development of the situation. The essential fact was that we could not reach the point of action outside the U.N. until we have exhausted the possibility of U.N. action. That process was indispensible both politically and legally. Self-help was not justifiable before the U.N. had a chance to fail.[2]

(U) In the meantime the British press was generally in favor of a firm stand but not a unilateral one. The Anglo-American meetings were secret, of course, and the public belief in London was that the U.S. had first taken a stern position and then had backed off as a result of Congressional caution.

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[1]JCSM-310-67, Memorandum for the SecDef, 1 June 1967, SECRET.
[2]State to White House, 250851Z May 1967, SECRET.

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[1]Amemb London to State, 262000Z May 1967, SECRET.
[2]British Embassy to E. Rostow, 261700Z May 1967, SECRET.

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[1]Message from Mr. Thomson to Mr. Rostow, via the British Ambassador, 27 May 1967, SECRET.

[2]Amemb London to State, 311800Z May 1967, SECRET.

[3]J-5 Memorandum for the Record (J5M 596-67), 28 May 1967, SECRET.

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(S) Nevertheless, the visit and the proposals stimulated an intensive round of U.S. political and military analysis.

C. LATER COORDINATION WITH THE BRITISH

(S) At this point it is probably well to record the rest of the story of our contact with the British. Apart from the high level contact, there was little formal coordination with the British in the crisis period. In part this was the consequence of the secrecy surrounding the Thomson visit, the purposes of which were not revealed to normal mechanisms for Anglo-American coordination. For example, the U.K. element of the U.S./U.K. Planning Group[1] in London informed the U.S. element around the 24th that the Thomson mission was going to Washington on very secret business, and that they did not know whether it was at U.S. or U.K. initiative. They wondered if the U.S. element knew more. The British element later reported to their U.S. counterparts that nothing conclusive had happened in D.C., and that presumably the mission would return to Washington at a later date.[2]

(S) The next day, after a phone conversation between CINCSTRIKE and the Chief of the U.S. element, CINCSTRIKE requested permission from the JCS to authorize the U.S. element, for the purpose of exchanging information of mutual interest, to discuss with the British element information concerning CINCSTRIKE [ ] and the subordinate Joint

[1]The U.S./U.K. Planning Group was established in 1961 and is housed in NAVEUR Headquarters, although reporting to CINCSTRIKE.

[2]Interview, U.S. Element, U.S./U.K. Planning Group, London, 6 July 1967.

Task Force [ ] (MECOMP-BRISK POINT), the two U.S. evacuation plans for the Middle East. Elements of these plans which would be discussed with the British would include the countries of concern, number of evacuees, aircraft deployment routes, naval forces to be employed, U.S. forces to be committed for peaceful evacuation phase only, and forward staging bases. CINCSTRIKE noted that any discussions would be conducted without reference to actual plans by name or number.[1]

(S) Authorization was granted and the authorizing message from CINCSTRIKE to the U.S. Element five days later contained tight constraints. No indications were to be made as to any U.S. commitments in regard to evacuations nor should any information be related to actual plans. The message said, curiously, that "if discussions were to be related to the current Middle East crisis, the U.S. Embassy in London should be kept fully informed." Also, a summary of the discussions was to be provided to CINCSTRIKE, the JCS, DoD, and State.[2]

(S) However, such discussions were not held with the British until 2 June.[3]

(S) After the war began on 5 June, there were no further meetings of the U.S./U.K. Planning Group. One of their major pieces of work had been a "U.S.-U.K. Military Study on the Arab-Israeli Problem 65" (revised January 1967). The objective of the study was to consider means to establish the status quo ante bellum in any war that might occur, a concept to be used if the U.S. and British governments were to make the political decision to intervene. With the strong affirmations of nonintervention by both governments once the fighting began, the Planning Group study remained hypothetical.[4]

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[1]CINCSTRIKE to JCS, 252238Z May 1967, SECRET.

[2]CINCSTRIKE to U.S. Element, U.S./U.K. Planning Group, 301631Z May 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.

[3]U.S. Element, U.S./U.K. Planning Group, to CINCSTRIKE, 021620Z June 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.

[4]U.S. Element, interview, 6 July 1967.

(S) There was some informal Service-to-Service liaison on the naval side. Early in the crisis the Royal Navy asked NAVEUR for U.S. ship locations. Then on the day of his departure for Washington, Admiral Bartosik of the Thomson mission came to NAVEUR to be briefed. NAVEUR later was prepared to brief the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defense, but it was decided that the Royal Navy would brief them on the basis of information provided by NAVEUR.[1]

(~~TS~~) Within the theater of action, the Commander of the U.S. Middle East Force in the Red Sea requested permission from CINCSTRIKE on 3 June to exchange information on a "quid pro quo basis" with British sources on intelligence and positions, specifically on ship positions, ship sightings, and Egyptian naval order of battle.[2]

(S) In the political field, as will be seen in the next section, there was some effort at coordination in the matter of soundings for a Maritime Declaration, and, of course, cooperation continued at the U.N. which, it might be added, was a central area of U.S. activity throughout the entire crisis.

D. THE U.S. POLICY RECOMMENDATION

(S) Despite the apparent U.K. pullback from their original forward position, U.S. unilateral planning went ahead.

(~~TS~~) Following receipt of the JCS study, the Senior Control Group on the 28th had prepared a draft memorandum for the President, addressing two interrelated subjects, the Maritime Declaration, the test of it and the scenario for it; and the question of Congressional consultation, including the text of a joint resolution. That afternoon Hoopes discussed the draft with the SecDef who expressed major reservations about some of the points Hoopes raised.

(~~TS~~) The three aspects of the scenario -- action in the U.N., a canvass of the maritime states in behalf of the Declaration, and

[1]NAVEUR, interview, 7 July 1967.
[2]COMIDEASTFOR to CINCSTRIKE/MEAFSA, 031815Z June 1967, TOP SECRET.

contingency planning for an international naval presence -- were all interrelated, the SecDef pointed out, with the question of timing and of the Congressional resolution. The SecDef was thoroughly adamant on the matter of the resolution. He was in favor of a resolution which clearly provided for the possibility of ultimate naval action, believing that the implication of this in the resolution was not enough. Hoopes pointed out the danger that an attempt to get such a specific resolution would lead to a political imbroglio, but the SecDef insisted that there was no sense in even talking about joint military planning or the Declaration, involving the possible use of force, unless a resolution were in hand. He felt we had to move backward from a resolution; we could not do anything the resolution didn't provide for and we couldn't do anything until the resolution passed. This was the indispensible foundation. He did not even think we could go forward with the resolution until the U.N. effort had been completed. Hoopes indicated that State's plan was to move simultaneously with efforts on the Declaration and soundings of Congress.

(TS) The SecDef felt that the nub of the problem lay in the use of U.S. forces in support of other than U.S. vessels, and thus what was needed was to write that kind of resolution and get it passed by the Congress; if it were impossible to get it passed, the SecDef believed we would never open the Strait. When Hoopes suggested that we had made certain assurances to the Israelis, the SecDef strongly denied that any assurances were given to Eban during his meeting with the President that we would use force to open the Strait for other than U.S. merchantmen. He felt, nevertheless, that the resolution could be passed in the circumstances following the failure of the U.N. and in circumstances which insured other nations' participation.

(TS) Hoopes and the SecDef discussed the JCS paper on the Strait, Hoopes feeling it was a reluctant effort and overly pessimistic, but recognizing the constraints under which the JCS worked. Specifically, these were the severe limitations on the forces immediately available.

The SecDef was particularly concerned about air cover, and felt air cover from ships or bases in the Mediterranean would be problematical.

(TS) The SecDef was opposed to any kind of generalized probe. He wanted specific actions aimed at specific objectives. He also saw no need to undertake further contingency planning with the British until the U.S. plan was worked out, and suggested the reference to it in the Control Group's draft be deleted. The point could wait until the President had focused on the interrelationship of the Declaration to the U.N. effort and the Congressional resolution.

(S) He finally stated his feeling that before any paper went to the President, he and the Secretary of State should review it. Hoopes agreed to send over the draft.[1]

(S) What emerged from the review by the Secretaries of State and Defense was a formal policy recommendation to the President, sent very late on the 28th.

(TS) The course of action involved a scenario of three steps: (1) action in or outside of the U.N. to head off the threat of a clash and aimed at longer term solutions to the Aqaba question; (2) a formal and public affirmation by the largest number possible of maritime nations of their support of the principle that the Strait and the Gulf were international waterways; (3) contingency planning immediately for the establishment of an international naval presence to support free passage of ships of all nations, if that were to become necessary. Implementing actions would be taken only after measures in the U.N. had been exhausted.

(TS) As to the handling of the Maritime Declaration, the memorandum stated, the Security Council was to meet the following day, and during the course of deliberations, possibly through the week, the U.S. would wish to circulate the Declaration of the Maritime Powers and have as many states as possible associate themselves with it. Thus far,

[1] EA tapes, 282000Z May 1967, SECRET.

however, initial soundings had indicated that only the Dutch and the Canadians were willing to support the declaration and to participate in a naval presence. The British too had already made soundings, without revealing the text of the Declaration, with the Italians, Norwegians, Danes, Belgians, Dutch, Greeks, Panamanians, Liberians, and Japanese. The U.S. had contacted on the Declaration and the naval presence the French, Belgians, Canadians, Dutch, Indians, Italians, and Norwegians. Reactions had varied but were not encouraging. Most states were prepared to support the principle regarding international waterways but tended to shy away from participation in effective action, such as the naval presence, to secure adherence to the principle.

(TS) It was necessary, McNamara and Rusk felt, to move formally on the Declaration. Subject to Congressional consultations, they believed the U.S. should present the proposed Declaration to the maritime powers in order that the overall scenario could move forward. Instructions to U.S. diplomatic posts indicated the division of responsibility between the British and ourselves for making approaches to selected capitals. These approaches would be to obtain signatures to a document which reaffirmed the principles set forth by the President in his statement of 23 May, but which did not commit the signatories to participate in any naval presence. We would, however, at the same time invite participation of certain nations in the proposed naval presence.

(TS) The memorandum then described the naval presence: (1) a limited protective force of four destroyers (2 U.S., 2 U.K.), a tactical command ship (U.S.) and light carrier (U.K.) could be assembled in the northern Red Sea in about one week. Such a force, however, would be relatively weak, devoid of self-contained air cover and ASW protection, and thus be vulnerable to attack and to damage by large UAR sea and air forces in the areas (the deterrent forces could provide some air cover over the Tiran area, but the distances from the Eastern Mediterranean would limit operational effectiveness); (2) a stronger balanced

deterrent force, augmented primarily by U.S. naval units from CONUS, could be assembled in 25-30 days. McNamara and Rusk believed that the delay of a testing of the passage until such a stronger force could be assembled would reduce the risk of a UAR challenge. This now appeared to be feasible, given our present assumptions in regard to Israeli restraint and projected timing of events at the U.N., of our efforts to develop adherents to the Declaration, and of our consultations with the Congress.

(TS) U.S. and U.K. forces in the Mediterranean now provided a powerful deterrent force (3 U.S. and 2 British attack carriers, and numerous other ships). British air forces in Cyprus might also be available. The presence and deployment of these forces would be designed to deter a UAR challenge to the passage of shipping through the Strait. If the UAR fired on merchantmen and their escorts, aircraft from the Mediterranean forces could intervene in the Tiran area or strike at major air bases and installations in the UAR. [

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(TS) The memorandum then stated a sharp caveat, reflecting Hoopes' memorandum to the SecDef. There were risks involved in testing the blockade with a limited or even an augmented protective force, which were not negligible. The UAR could move additional warships through the Canal to the south and augment its airpower in Sinai. We should be at pains, accordingly, as we approached a test, to make arrangements that leave us a choice between a direct U.S./U.K. military confrontation with the UAR and an Israeli-UAR confrontation. If military conflict appeared unavoidable, it might well be critical to the interests of limiting the ensuing hostilities and the restoring peace if, following a UAR military challenge to free passage, Israeli forces were to engage, but not American. The fact of our nonengagement would be a decisive factor if the ensuing situation should require effective Soviet and

U.N. support of efforts to terminate hostilities. The fact of our non-engagement also would not preclude continued meaningful support of Israel. It remained the view of the JCS that the Israelis could defeat in a reasonably short time any likely combination of Arab enemies.

(TS) The memorandum recommended that the President brief the combined Congressional leadership and then afterwards make formal approaches to other nations in regard to the test of the Declaration. The President should brief the Congressional representatives on the current situation, and review our general strategy, with specific reference to the proposed Declaration.

(TS) It was also recommended that at the meeting with the Congressional leadership, the President allude to the possibility of a joint Congressional resolution which would be desirable to have if it developed that U.S. ships in an international task force were called upon to protect non-U.S. ships. The timing of such a request to Congress should be carefully considered, since, the Secretaries added, "while it was true that many Congressional doves may be in the process of conversion to hawks, the problem of 'Tonkin Gulfitis' remains serious." Thus an effort to get a meaningful resolution from Congress ran the risk of becoming bogged down in acrimonious debate. It was recommended, therefore, that a formal request for a resolution be delayed until (1) it had become clear to the Congress that we had exhausted other diplomatic remedies in and outside the U.N.; (2) our soundings had indicated that such a request would receive prompt and strong support. A suggested text was included.

(TS) As to the timing of the scenario, the Secretaries stated their hope to time the completion of the actions on the Declaration to coincide with the final action of the Security Council, hopefully toward the end of the week. They would seek to have all the contingency planning on the naval presence completed by the end of the week of 5 June.

(~~TS~~) The State Department felt strongly that movement on the Declaration and the contingency naval presence was needed if the U.S. were to meet its understanding to the Israelis and have them continue to stay their hand militarily. This was the nub of the U.S. problem.

(~~TS~~) The memorandum concluded by recommending:

1. That the President approve the draft Declaration of the Maritime Nations.

2. That the President authorize SecState and SecDef to send the telegram (draft included) instructing U.S. Ambassadors to seek commitments from the governments to which they were accredited to adhere to the Declaration.

3. That the President approve our proceeding with the contingency planning on the naval presence, including the approaches to the principal maritime powers.

(~~TS~~) Appended to this significant document were three suggested drafts covering the Maritime Declaration, the Joint Congressional Resolution, and the circular telegram of instructions to embassies regarding our policy and program.[1]

(~~S~~) The draft circular telegram was interesting as a statement of U.S. policy as it was to be presented to other countries. It began by pointing out that we had been examining with the British the desirability of a maritime declaration. All addressees were to coordinate with the British to ensure most effective mutual support. After stating U.S. thoughts on the international waters issue, the draft suggested answers to possible queries. In regard to the U.S. intention, it was to remove the present danger to peace through the U.N. As to U.S. intentions if the U.N. failed, this would be answered then, but we would not exclude the possibility of protecting maritime rights outside the U.N. As to commitments arising from signature, the only commitment would be to the principle contained. Finally, in view of the fact that several maritime nations had supported the principle

[1]Memorandum for the President, from the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense, 28 May 1967, SECRET EXDIS.

of free transit in the U.N. debates of early 1957 in order to secure Israeli withdrawal from Sinai, adherence to the Declaration would merely reaffirm the long standing position of those governments.[1]

(S) The draft Maritime Declaration stated the concern of the signatory governments over developments. Its key passage read:

> "In regard to shipping through the waterways that serve as ports on the Gulf of Aqaba, our governments reaffirm the view that the Gulf is an international waterway into and through which the vessels of all nations have a right of passage. Our governments will assert this right on behalf of all shipping sailing under their flags, and our governments are prepared to cooperate among themselves and to join with others in seeking general recognition of this right."[2]

(TS) The draft Congressional Resolution, a crucial element in the U.S. scenario, read:

> "The United States regards the preservation of the principles of international law in regard to freedom of navigation on international waterways as a vital interest of the international community and the United States and is essential to the maintenance of peace in the Middle East. Consequently, the United States will assert the right of passage for its own vessels through the Strait and the Gulf and is prepared to join with other nations, within and outside the U.N., in seeking a general recognition of this right for the vessels of all nations. The President is authorized to take appropriate action to secure effective observance of this right."

(S) In view of the fact that the key cables were sent out by State three days after the President received the memorandum, it appears that the President accepted the scenario and recommendations.

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[1]This circular telegram was sent out by State to all Diplomatic Posts, 311846Z May 1967, SECRET.

[2]This draft was sent to all Diplomatic Posts, 311847Z May 1967.

(S) The objectives the U.S. sought, however, tended to be mutually exclusive. Above all, the U.S. wished to prevent the outbreak of major hostilities. In order to prevent the Israelis, as the ones most likely to open hostilities, from striking, it was necessary to give sufficient proof of our intention to honor our guarantees both to them and in regard to the freedom of international waterways. Also, U.S. preparations conceivably would have a restraining effect on Nasser as far as his enforcing the blockade was concerned. At the same time, the U.S. did not want to become involved in Middle East hostilities on any basis, even if it were the U.N. support and approval, this being the absolute minimum qualification. Military planning and deployments, however innocently conceived, invariably carried with them the risk of involvement.

(S) The question of timing was becoming crucial. The U.S. was trying to prevent both the UAR from enforcing the blockade and the Israelis from testing it. The policy recommendation had stated the belief that the delay in testing the blockade involved in the beefing up of available U.S.-U.K. forces, some twenty-five to thirty days, would in the long run pay off by reducing the risk of a UAR challenge to a test probe.

(S) Yet, the Israelis apparently felt that the delay also reduced the likelihood of the probe's ever being made, save on a U.S. unilateral or at best a U.S.-U.K. basis. They felt that time was against them, that the longer the blockade existed untested, the greater would become the de facto acceptance of it. As the crisis faded, so would U.N. interest in the Strait issue, and the Israelis would have lost their most opportune and appropriate moment to take steps in their own behalf. In view of these attitudes the U.S. belief that the situation could be held intact for a month or so may be open to question.

V. THE DEEPENING CRISIS

(U) In the meantime the pace had quickened in the Middle East. Nasser, after his announcement of the blockade, began a series of war-like speeches in which he threatened total destruction of Israel if war came. The Israelis in response reached their peak mobilization strength on the 26th. The UAR had done so earlier. It was known in Washington that the Israelis could not maintain full mobilization very long without serious disruption of their economy, so the element of timing became ever more crucial.

(U) The war fever spread as Moslem states all over Asia and Africa began to rally to Nasser's side with the call for a holy war.[1]

(TS)

(TS)

[redacted]

[redacted] (TS)

(TS) On the 25th the Israeli Foreign Minister, Mr. Eban, flew to Washington in the wake of a private message from the Israeli Prime Minister to President Johnson.[2] The message stated the view of Israeli intelligence that a UAR and Syrian attack was imminent, and requested a U.S. public statement of assurance and support to Israel against this aggression.

(TS) Eban met with Rostow that same night, at which time Rostow told him he thought it most unlikely that the President would be able to meet the request. [redacted]

[redacted] Rostow explained that while U.S. intelligence sources did not agree with his as to the imminence of the threat, we were transmitting a message to Cairo as a precautionary step. Eban seemed satisfied with this response to the urgent Israeli request of the afternoon.

(TS) Rostow explained the essence of current U.S.-U.K. thinking -- thinking only, not policy -- consisting of a short energetic effort in the Security Council, a public declaration which would be made almost immediately, while the Security Council was in session, and a contingency plan now being drafted by U.S. and British experts. [1]

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[1] CIA to Gen. Carroll, DIA, for passage to the President, 251700Z May 1967, TOP SECRET.

[2] This was not the only private message. The EA tapes of 0039Z on 27 May reveal that a confidential message from Nasser to the President had come in shortly before, and was being relayed by Mr. Walt Rostow of the White House Staff to the SecDef.

[redacted]

(TS)

(TS) Rostow replied that the U.S. was carefully setting the U.N. scenario to avoid bogging down. As to the escorts, he said, "It was normal to ask the policeman for help before the posse arrived." Rostow also recalled what had been said at dinner that evening, that the President had not yet decided on a U.S. policy in regard to the British plan, and that he would need to consult with Congressional leaders and perhaps get a Congressional Resolution. After all, we hoped the UAR would not challenge a naval presence, but if it did there was a risk of war which had to be faced.

(TS)

Rostow replied that only the President could answer his questions at their meeting the following day.[1]

(S) The President was briefed for his meeting with Eban by a long memorandum from the SecState the next day. Rusk commented that as to the urgent Israeli request of the day before, U.S. intelligence did not agree with its basis. Eban, however, had indicated he would not press this view and request and seemed satisfied with the precautionary message we had given the UAR Ambassador.

[1]Memorandum of Conversation between Foreign Minister Eban and Mr. E. Rostow, 25 May 1967, SECRET.

(TS) Rusk also reported that Eban had made clear that the U.S. Ambassador's intervention on the 23rd had held off a preemptive strike immediately after Nasser declared the blockade.

(TS) Rusk told the President that he had two choices now:

1. Let the Israelis decide how best to protect their own interests -- "unleash them." He strongly recommended against this.

2. Take a positive position, but not a final one, on the British proposal. The British cabinet was to meet the next day on this. He recommended this policy as the best hope of avoiding a war which could gravely damage many U.S. national interests.

(S) Rusk recommended the President make four points:

1. The U.S. did not agree with the Israeli view of the unlikelihood of any Security Council action which would be effective in regard to the Strait. However, the U.S. believed an attempt had to be made in the U.N., even if only to demonstrate that the U.N. could not act.

2. The U.S. believed that the British proposal of a Declaration should move forward after consultations with Congress and concurrently with U.N. consideration. The U.S. would then be prepared to encourage the maritime states to join in such a Declaration which would be presented to the Security Council not for formal approval, but for inclusion in the record.

3. Our intention was to see the Strait and the Gulf remain open. We could not, at this time, see all the steps that would be required to achieve this objective. To this end we were examining the British plan for a task force.

4. We would consult with the Israelis at every step of the way and expect them to reciprocate.

(S)

consultations with Congress indicated support for an international approach and caution in regard to unilateral U.S. commitments and action.

(TS) Rusk also said he had put the case against preemptive strikes to Eban very hard, reminding him that we had lived with the Soviets on this issue and had definitely come down against it.

(TS) The SecState recommended that the President tell Eban that Israel must show restraint. We understood her difficulties but preemptive acts would cause extreme difficulties for the U.S. The question of responsibility for initiating hostilities was a major problem for the U.S. In our position of world leadership the American people would do what has to be done "if the fault is on the other side and there is no alternative." Therefore, the question of responsibility for initiating hostilities was crucial. Of course, if we were to have information that the other side was moving, that would be a matter of great concern.[1]

(S) Presumably the President made these points to Eban the next day. The U.S. search for a policy was being severely pinched now by the element of time. The U.S. position on the Strait was that if the U.N. or the maritime powers did not act firmly and soon, an Israeli strike was bound to come. For example, Rostow who apparently was an activist in this affair, chided the Canadian Ambassador on the 29th about the Canadian draft resolution in the U.N., saying the principal powers could not waffle or fudge the issue. Any attempt to evade taking a strong position on the right of innocent passage, he emphasized, would lead inevitably to an Israeli attack.

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[1]Memorandum for the President from the SecState, 26 May 1967, SECRET.

(C) However, as has been shown in the previous chapter, U.S. policy to avoid a war by taking a firm stand was becoming increasingly based upon the degree and extent of international support for that policy. If we were unable to muster an international group, inside or outside the U.N., and appeared to be backing off, the Israelis would be left no choice. The clock was ticking against them.

(C) The critical dilemma in the firm policy, however, was to determine how far down the road to a military clash with the UAR we wished to go in order to prevent the Israelis from doing so.

VI. U.S. UNILATERAL PREPARATIONS FOR CRISIS

(S) As the Egyptian declaration of the blockade gave the crisis its decisive impetus toward war, so the British initiative had launched a furious round of unilateral planning within U.S. military and political circles. Accompanying this planning there came into existence a special set of organizational entities and relationships, set up specifically to handle the crisis.

A. ORGANIZATION FOR CRISIS

(U) Shortly after the crisis began on 14 May, the SecState directed Eugene Rostow, the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, to monitor personally all interdepartmental activities. He remained the central figure in the working arrangements until the war was under way.

(U) The organizational structure to handle the crisis grew rapidly, and consequently for the first two weeks, it was never clear to many of the participants just what the lines of responsibility and control were. There was a proliferation of groups and ad hoc committees, with two reorganizations during the four-week crisis period.

(S) On the 28th the organization appeared to a JCS representative in that machinery to consist of one senior group and three subordinate groups.

1. The Senior Control Group. E. Rostow was chairman, with OSD representation appearing to vary at Rostow's volition. Hoopes of ISA attended most meetings, and an OJCS representative, when invited, was the Acting Deputy Director (Regional) of J-5. The purpose of this group was to concern itself with long range problems and to make recommendations to the SecState in order to assist decision making at the highest level.

2. The Arab/Israel Task Force. This was chaired by Roger Davies, the Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs of State. There was an OSD representative from the Office of Near East and South Asian Affairs of ISA, and the Acting Chief, Middle East/Africa/South Asia Division of J-5 as the OJCS representative. (This was the only group as of 28 May to have published any organizational material.) Its mission was to impart the decisions of the Senior Control Group and to assign tasks to various members. It was supposed to look at the short range problems, but clearly the line of distinction between the long range and short range was blurred. The situation papers prepared in the Task Force were routed to the Control Group which used them as a basis for decisions.

3. The Contingency Planning Group. This was chaired by the Special Assistant to the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs. Its OSD member was from ISA and its OJCS representative from the Middle East/Africa/South Asia Division of J-5. The Group was charged with writing contingency plans for specific problems as they developed. It was not clear to the JCS observer that the papers generated here passed through the Arab/Israel Task Force en route to the Control Group.

4. The Evacuation Group. This group concerned itself with specific evacuation problems and appeared to be manned by the same members of the permanent Washington Liaison Group. The OJCS representative was from General Operations Division of J-3.[1]

(S) With the next three days the structure was reorganized. A memorandum from Rostow on the 31st gave the new breakdown:

1. Control Group - E. Rostow, Chairman

W. Rostow (White House Staff), Cyrus Vance (Deputy SecDef), Mr. Kohler (Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political

[1] J-5 Memorandum for the Record, J5M 596-67, 28 May 1967, SECRET.

Affairs), Mr. Battle (Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs).

2. Middle East Task Force - L. Battle, Chairman

a. Operating Staff for the Task Force

b. Subcommittees of the Task Force

(1) Contingency Military Planning

(2) Evacuation

(3) Economic Vulnerabilities

(4) Committee on political aspects of maritime plans and the Maritime Declaration

(5) U.N. aspects

(6) Legal problems

(7) NATO consultation

(8) Political settlement

(9) Briefing committee

(Ø) Rostow pointed out in the memorandum that many people served on two or more committees.[1]

(Ø) It will be noted that this reorganization dropped an OJCS representative from the Control Group. The OJCS was still represented on the Task Force, and the objection by the OJCS representative at the switch was met by State's argument that the Deputy SecDef, as a permanent member, could bring anyone he wanted to the meetings. This change apparently made it very difficult for the Joint Staff to get feedback from the Control Group.

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[1]Memorandum from E. Rostow, Organization for Middle East Crisis, 31 May 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.

[2]]

(C) The second reorganization occurred on 7 June, two days after the fighting had broken out. Initially it had appeared that the Control Group was a replacement for the permanent Senior Interdepartmental Group (SIG). However, on 7 June a new layer was created on top of the structure by the establishment of the Middle East Committee of the National Security Council, soon to be called the Special Committee. This was, in effect, a rump NSC under the SecState. McGeorge Bundy was brought back into Government to act as Chief of Staff (the committee was also called the Bundy Committee). This committee included the SecDef, the Director of Central Intelligence, and the CJCS. The President occasionally sat in on its meetings.

(C) The Special Committee first looked at policy on arms supply to the Middle East, and then rapidly spread its attention to issues of emergency relief, post cease fire problems, petroleum, the denial of U.S. intervention (countering the Arab falsehood), the situation at Wheelus Air Base in Tripoli, evacuation, longer term economic aid, and U.N. operations. Thus, it tended to bring into its purview all the areas previously covered by the subcommittees of the Middle East Task Force.

(C) Information moved more satisfactorily to the JCS once the CJCS took his place on the Special Committee. He would attend the regular 1800 meeting of the Committee, armed with talking papers prepared by J-5. At 0800 the following morning he would brief the Joint Chiefs and J-5. It was the feeling of the military that things did go more smoothly when the Special Committee became the decision point.

(C) This improvement may have been due not only to the three weeks of operation which had brought the mechanism into smoother functioning, but also to the fact that decision now was placed at the very top level. Earlier it had been difficult to know "where the ball was and where the impact points were." One participant referred to the whole crisis management structure in its earlier phase as "a

floating crap game." Participants were never clear where decisions were made.[1]

(C) In any event, the established existing machinery, the SIG for approval and the two pertinent Interdepartmental Regional Groups (IRGs) (Africa and the Near East, the division geographically is at the Red Sea) for staff work, was not utilized. This meant that new organizations, procedures and people had to be put together under pressure.

(C) As a final footnote, a J-5 Memorandum for Record of 14 June, after the war was over, indicated that the Control Group had been subsumed by the Special Committee and was possibly working as a special subcommittee of the Special Committee. The Middle East Task Force had been dissolved and its chairman was going to recommend an expanded IRG be used for future interdepartmental actions. As to the subcommittees, it was apparent that most members of the Task Force did not know what or how many subcommittees had been established in the previous two weeks.[2]

B. JOINT POLITICAL-MILITARY PLANNING ACTIVITIES

(C) Planning for the crisis at the national level can be categorized into three broad phases. At first, planning was politico-military and concerned itself with a generalized Middle East war with generalized commitments. Then following the Egyptian announcement of the blockade, planning became more specific and oriented toward two objectives. The first concerned the British originated scheme to break the blockade at the Strait of Tiran; the second concerned a unilateral U.S. military response in the Middle East.

(C) For the early planning, the policy makers turned to the inter-agency politico-military group which for the previous two and a half years had attempted to grapple with just these problems. On 19 May,

[1] J-5, Interview, 30 July 1967.
[2] J-5 M685-67, 14 June 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.

Rostow called a meeting of the appropriate agencies including the Joint Staff, to address the Middle East situation. He reactivated the Contingency Coordinating Committee (CCC) Working Group and directed a quick review of the Arab-Israeli CCC study of May 1966. The Working Group convened at noon on the 20th and over the weekend produced an abbreviated updated precis of the CCC Study which was distributed. The CJCS was briefed on it by the Joint Staff representative (the Director of the Middle East/Africa/South Asia Division, J-5) on the 23rd, prior to a conference with the SecDef on the crisis.

(S) The original CCC Study was intended as a base line from which to start current planning and actions, should the crisis develop. It had served that purpose. However, because of the fast developing situation and the intense involvement of the JCS in interagency deliberations, the JCS representative advised against a complete review of the study by the Joint Staff at that time. Rather, he suggested, it appeared more feasible to have the Joint Staff address specific military actions that might be involved in the crisis as individual items as they occurred.[1]

(S) With the organization of the ad hoc Middle East crisis management mechanism, the newly formed Contingency Planning Group took over the work of the Contingency Coordinating Committee. This group, along with the other subcommittees of the Middle East Task Force, were racing to prepare papers for the Senior Control Group, which would give them an overview of the crisis and its implications. On the 28th a draft paper, entitled "An Immediate Arab-Israel War" was ready, taking a broader look at the U.S. role than had the JCS study directed specifically to the Strait of Tiran. The draft provided an interesting indication of U.S. expectations and estimates a week before the war actually began. Upon completion the paper went to the Senior Control Group.

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[1]Memorandum for the Director Joint Staff, from Director Middle East/Africa/South Asia Division, J-5, 24 May 1967, SECRET.

(S) The governing assumption was that Israel struck first. The paper was in seven sections: country objectives, war scenarios, Arab economic reprisals (against oil supplies and Canal traffic), Soviet capabilities and possible courses of action, possible U.S. actions (including a summary U.N. scenario), possible outcomes and post-war bargaining positions, actions to be taken in the first forty-eight hours.

(S) The statement of U.S. objectives indicated the problematical nature of those objectives, since some were, in the given circumstances of the moment, contradictory. The paramount objective was to maintain maximum U.S. influence in the area, including continued access to bases and resources. In order to accomplish this objective, the U.S. had to take active, credible, impartial and quick actions to end the fighting. Other objectives, some dependent on the first one, were: to prevent Soviet military involvement and to limit Soviet involvement in the post-war settlement; to maintain friendly Arab regimes (especially in Jordan, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia); to preserve the territorial integrity of all states; to reduce Nasser's influence in the Arab world; to insure innocent passage of the Strait of Tiran; to strengthen the peace-keeping machinery in the area; to lay some basis for the resolution of outstanding Arab/Israeli issues.

(S) The paper clearly foresaw the course of the war, but overestimated the time it would take for the Israelis to reach their objectives. There was also an accurate forecast of the Arab attempt to see a conspiracy of Israel with the U.S. and Britain, and to retaliate against them economically.

(S) The estimate of Soviet intentions still was cautiously hopeful. The study assumed that, irrespective of their pre-war machinations and objectives, the Soviets would want the fighting stopped. If the Arabs were winning, the danger of Western intervention was raised. If the Arabs were losing, they would seek Soviet aid. Either way the Soviets would foresee Arab pressure for direct

Soviet military involvement or for forms of assistance the Soviets would not want to give. The Soviets would also wish to avoid eventually having to face the choice of intervening for the Arabs or of abandoning them. If they were to intervene, they would face the same sorts of problems they faced in Cuba, fighting a local war in disadvantageous circumstances. The Contingency Planning Group felt that the Soviets would not undertake even quite limited military actions. They did not rule out alerts and demonstrations, but problems of access to the area and limited naval strength curtailed any major operations.

(S) Nor was it felt the Soviets would retaliate by applying pressure against us in Berlin or elsewhere.

(S) The range of U.S. military actions was laid out. These included: a limited show of force to counter Soviet pretensions and to show serious U.S. concern; precautionary deployment of U.S. military (mainly naval) forces for possible need to evacuate Americans from the area. Land forces would be deployed only if essential and if such action guaranteed effective evacuation; diplomatic preparations for the use of Moron (Spain) and Incirlik (Turkey) as staging bases and for overflight rights in France; an attempt to develop coordinated military contingency planning with the U.K., Canada, the Netherlands, etc.; establishment of a naval and air blockade to prevent arms and military supplies to one or all the combatants; the deployment of ground and air forces as part of a U.N. buffer force to secure an armistice; in the unlikely event the Israelis were losing and requested U.S. aid, the use of U.S. aircraft from carriers and/or Israeli airfields to stabilize the front and to protect Israeli cities. As a last resort U.S. ground forces would be inserted to stabilize the front.[1]

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[1] Contingency Planning Group Paper, Immediate Arab-Israeli War, 28 May 1967, SECRET.

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(S) Additional military inputs to the study the next day concerned U.S. forces available from outside the Middle East area. Initial forces from CONUS with reaction times were:

a. One airborne brigade (5500 men) - eighteen days closure time with one battalion closing in four days.

b. One CASF - three days.

Follow-on forces were:

a. One airborne division less one brigade (12,000 men) - forty-five days by air.

b. One-third of a marine division - twenty-eight days by sea.

From EUCOM one airborne brigade could close in two days, if optimum routing were used.

(S) At 1530Z on 30 May the Contingency Planning Group again hurriedly assembled to begin developing a paper designed to program a possible sequence of unescorted ship probes through the Strait and the Gulf in the near future. According to the chairman of the Group, both the SecDef and the SecState were convinced that some normal traffic through the objective area was needed in order to dispel the notion that Nasser's closure of the Strait was a de facto reality.

(S) The paper was to open with a chronological listing and a description of the ships which had already traversed the waters of the objective area in the previous two weeks. State was assigned this task. DoD was to handle ship plots for vessels due to traverse the Strait in the next forty-eight-hour, seventy-two-hour, and two-week periods. For each ship information required included name, ownership, registry, nature of cargo, origin of cargo, destination, and schedules. Problems of maritime insurance for ships participating in the probes would be examined by State.

(S) The several aspects of command and control would be examined: the role of the NMCC; NMCC-U.K. coordination; the issue of where overall command of the operation would reside; communications procedures; the issue of just who would enter into immediate negotiations with the U.K. in regard to the problem.

[redacted]

(S) The matter of scenario and timing would be handled by both State and Defense, including such questions as whose ship, the first test and the rights of search, and probable results.

(S) The inputs were required by noon on the 31st with a draft to be ready for the Control Group that night and a review by Rusk and McNamara the following morning.

(S) Immediately following this planning cycle, the Contingency Planning Group would start to develop a plan related to the formation of a naval presence in the crisis area, the plan to include such topics as: whose ships; follow-on tests; an escort scenario; Nasser acquiesces at Tiran but retaliates elsewhere; U.S./U.K. engagement with UAR; withdrawal of the naval patrol in the face of a limited or an all-out Arab-Israeli war.[1]

(S) The high level politico-military planners were now exposed to the estimates of the potential economic consequences of U.S. intervention. The Working Group on Economic Vulnerabilities of the Task Force submitted its report on the 31st. It was a gloomy report, specifying that the U.S. had almost no economic leverage on the Arabs; that they, in contrast, held powerful weapons against the Atlantic nations, especially Britain; that they could cause the loss of half a billion dollars per year in U.S. exchange earnings, loss of billions in U.S. assets, a British loss of a billion dollars in foreign exchange, and a crisis in sterling and the international monetary system.[2]

(S) An interesting twist to the oil problem was given by an oil expert brought to a Control Group meeting by Rostow. The expert recommended that the U.S. and U.K. not invite all possible contributing nations to the proposed international maritime group in order to avoid losing all their oil supplies. By leaving out a few nations, an excuse

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[1] J-5 Memorandum for Record, 30 May 1967, SECRET.

[2] Working Group on Economic Vulnerabilities, First Report, 31 May 1967 SECRET.

would be given to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to continue selling oil to "innocent" countries, which could then be transhipped.[1]

C. THE PROBLEM OF OVERFLIGHT/BASE RIGHTS

(S) As political and military planning progressed, planners became increasingly conscious of the constraints on U.S. actions. The clause used in the numerous studies and messages, "if optimum routing were used," expressed one of the most serious constraints, and certainly the most serious military constraint, on potential U.S. actions in the Middle East. For the U.S. to operate in the Eastern Mediterranean/Middle East, there was no substitution for reliance upon overflight and staging base rights in several countries. The problem had first been encountered during the deployment of airborne forces to Lebanon in July 1958, and nothing about the dimensions of the problem had really changed since then.

(S) U.S. dependence upon such rights was illustrated by the deployment of forces involved in the Contingency Planning Group study. For EUCOM forces, overflight rights were required for either France, Austria, and Italy, or for Switzerland and Italy. If these were not forthcoming, an alternate routing around France, with a refueling stop in Spain or Gibraltar, would be required. For forces from CONUS, the most efficient route would be to use Moron for refueling and Incirlik for staging.

(S) The Contingency Planning Group Study indicated that the Turks were sensitive to Arab and Soviet pressure, and were unlikely to allow Incirlik to be used except under U.N. cover. If Incirlik were not available, U.S. forces could still, although much less efficiently, deploy from Malta or Cyprus or even Moron. If Spain refused transit, the next best alternative would be bases in the United Kingdom with overflight of France if available. Further alternatives were considered either much less efficient or less desirable. Wheelus would

[1] Interview, J-5, 8 August 1967.

probably be available in the unlikely event the U.S. was conducting operations in support of Jordan or Lebanon.

(S) The preliminary estimates as to the availability of bases was not overly optimistic. A poll of State Department Desk Officers on the 26th indicated their assessment that there would be no overflight or base problem under conditions whereby U.S. forces were executing evacuation or U.N. peacekeeping operations. Under conditions of U.S. unilateral contingency operations, however, the estimate was:

a. Malta - possible

b. Cyprus - open to question

c. Turkey - no

d. Spain - definitely not, if U.S. assistance were pro-Israel. Spain had overriding interests in Morocco and other areas of North Africa.

e. Azores - possible

f. Wheelus - no, if operations were against Arabs

g. Italy - unknown

h. Greece - unknown

i. Cyprus - unknown[1]

(S) In the meantime State had polled its Embassies in the countries of interest, asking an evaluation as to probable reactions on possible U.S. requests for landing/overflight rights for four separate contingencies: (a) emergency evacuation of U.S. citizens; (b) U.N. peacekeeping operations; (c) unilateral U.S. intervention; (d) intervention with the U.K. or other European states. By the 31st this information was available to the Washington planners:[2]

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[1] J5M-596-67, Memorandum for the Record, 28 May 1967, SECRET.

[2] J-5 Memorandum for Record, 31 May 1967, SECRET.

Embassy	Cont.A	Cont.B	Cont.C	Cont.D
Valleta	yes	yes	problem, but probably yes	more acceptable than C
Lisbon	yes	delay	probably yes	probably yes, especially with France
Madrid	yes	probably yes	probably no	no, unless Spain participates
Rome	yes	yes	probably yes	easier than C, especially if Italy joins
Nicosia	yes	yes	interference	same as C
Athens	yes	yes	yes, but difficult	yes

(S) These estimates were purely American, as no approaches to or even soundings of the various governments concerned was authorized.

(S) CINCEUR kept polling its MAAGs throughout the period on the same points. Generally, the assessment was that most of the pertinent nations would permit peaceful evacuation operations only. Greece seemed the only strong point. In Italy there was a division in the government; Turkey seemed more dubious as the crisis deepened. For any sort of intervention purposes, CINCEUR began to assume the route would have to be Azores -- possibly Italy -- Greece.[1]

D. PLANNING AT THE JCS AND UNIFIED COMMAND LEVELS

(U) Two unified commands were involved in the Middle East crisis, EUCOM and STRIKCOM. CINCUER's control of the major on-scene U.S. military force, the Sixth Fleet, plus the advantages of proximity and an on-going relationship, through NATO, with the countries whose base rights we sought, gave CINCEUR a weight in Middle East affairs which, in real terms, matched the statutory assignment of responsibility for the Eastern Mediterranean littoral to CINCSTRIKE.

[1]USEUCOM, interview J-3, 4 July 1967.

(TS) CINCSTRIKE had two previously prepared intervention plans for an Arab-Israeli war, his [ ] providing for intervention in behalf of Israel (dated January 1967) and [ ] providing for intervention in behalf of the Arabs. On 20 May the JCS requested CINCSTRIKE's comments as to his capability to execute [ ].

(TS) STRIKE replied on the 24th that it was their estimate that rather than an improbable intervention, an emergency evacuation mission to protect and to evacuate U.S. non-combatants and designated aliens at the request of State was now the most likely contingency in prospect. Accordingly, a CINCSTRIKE/CINCMEAFSA/USJTF employment plan had been prepared based on CINCSTRIKE [ ] modified to meet the current situation and to make provision for simultaneous evacuations from Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, UAR. The plan would be delivered to the JCS the following day.

(TS) [ ] (BRISK POINT) was based on the assumption that evacuation operations would be conducted under peaceful conditions and in a permissive environment regarding the host countries. However, the plan also provided for the introduction of joint Army, Navy and Air Force forces to support the evacuation, which would provide an initial force capability comparable to that necessary to implement [ ].

(TS) STRIKE then specified the forces required and the shortfalls associated with them especially in on-call Army forces. The evaluation concluded that the initial and follow-on forces could be deployed and operated effectively in response to the mission requirements, but that serious problems would be encountered in the event on-call forces were required to augment the deployed force.

(TS) The most critical limiting factor, in STRIKE's opinion, might be the securing of essential overflight/base rights, refueling

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[1] JCS 5886 to CINCSTRIKE, CINCEUR, 201637Z May 1967, SECRET.

and other facilities essential to the successful introduction of forces into the Middle East under any likely contingency. These problems could be expected to become greatly aggravated once U.S. intentions were known. [ ] STRIKE emphasized, was based upon the utilization of Spanish, Libyan and Turkish bases for deployment and employment.[1]

(TS) It is interesting to note that even this early, CINCSTRIKE had turned aside from its intervention plans which no one really thought the U.S. would or could carry out. Instead attention was focussed on evacuation, and STRIKE drew up MECOMP (Middle East Comprehensive)[ ] an offshoot of the basic JCS approved[ ] distributed before hostilities. MECOMP was a JTF plan, not approved by the JCS, since such was not necessary so long as such a plan is merely an implementation of the basic approved plan.[2]

(S) Even before this reply had been sent to the JCS, STRIKE had again been queried by the JCS on the 23rd, requesting that STRIKE provide recommended routes and base requirements for the implementation of[ ] assuming the denial of landing/overflight rights by Libyan, Turkish, and Spanish governments. STRIKE responded that the preferred route was the Azores, Malta, Cyprus, with Cyprus as the final staging base. Preliminary information available indicated that these bases possessed facilities capable of supporting forces involved in the plan. If, however, any limiting factors were known to the JCS, STRIKE should immediately be apprised of them.

(S) Alternate routes which appeared feasible were: (1) Azores to Athens (final staging base); (2) Azores to Malta (final staging base); (3) Azores to Aviano (final staging base). However, any final staging base but Cyprus would seriously affect the employment of fighter aircraft.[3]

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[1]CINCSTRIKE to JCS, 242130Z May 1967, TOP SECRET.
[2]CINCSTRIKE, interview, 25 July 1967.
[3]CINCSTRIKE to JCS, 241905Z May 1967, SECRET.

(S) STRIKE felt that the real problem was in basing, not in overflight.[1]

(S) The increasing tempo of planning actively was indicated by a JCS request to CINCSTRIKE and CINCEUR on the 25th for assignment of an officer from each command who was familiar with the Command plans to assist in Washington planning activities.[2]

(S) On the 26th the JCS initiated a new planning cycle. In a message to CINCSTRIKE, for information to CINCEUR and CINCLANT, the JCS asked for comments in regard to a JCS study which had been requested at an NSC meeting on 24 May, to assess the U.S. interests in the Middle East and how and to what degree the U.S. should support Israel. Terms of reference for the comments were provided.

a. Unilateral U.S. military actions would be predicated on a U.S. estimate of who was winning the conflict, i.e., a U.S. military response might vary considerably on whether we estimated Israel was going to be the victor or the loser.

b. To what extent should the U.S. respond if the Arabs initiated the conflict?

c. To what extent should the U.S. respond if Israel initiated the conflict?

d. Were U.S. forces, in being, sufficient to react to the recommendations that result from points b and c?

e. A basic assumption would be that once U.S. forces were committed, the ultimate objective would be to stop aggression and insure the territorial integrity of all the Middle Eastern states.[3]

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[1]CINCSTRIKE, interview, 25 July 1967.

[2]JCS 6263 to CINCSTRIKE, CINCEUR, 251857Z May 1967, SECRET.

[3]JCS 6365 to CINCSTRIKE, info CINCEUR, CINCLANT, 261937Z May 1967, SECRET.

(S) The study to be done was apparently requested by the CJCS and the terms of reference were offered for his approval.[1]

(S) The first response in came from CINCEUR on the 28th. It began with an intelligence assessment (extremely accurate in the light of what ultimately happened) of what the Israelis were likely to do. Consequently, CINCEUR felt that U.S. unilateral action should be considered only as a last resort after U.S. participation in U.N. action; in multinational action; in U.S./U.K. action.

(S) Like STRIKE, CINCEUR emphasized that the most dominant limiting factor for any U.S. participation in Middle East contingencies was political, namely the status of staging and overflight rights and operating installations. He recommended that the U.S. take some immediate steps to enhance acceptance of the U.S. position and to assist in obtaining increased operational rights essential to uninhibited U.S. participation in the Middle East. For example, we could woo Turkey by increased U.S. support in the North Atlantic Council for Turkey's revised force goals. Or we could improve relations with Greece, strained since the Greek military coup of April, by relaxation of the suspension on MAP delivery imposed at that time.

(S) He pointed out that land-based U.S. aircraft would operate at a serious disadvantage in conducting operations from locations in Malta, Greece, or Italy. The initial burden of tactical sortie requirements would necessitate reliance on the Sixth Fleet unless and until operating rights from Turkey and Cyprus could be assured.

(S) The Fleet was ready to execute Phase I from COMNAVFORUSJTFME (COMSIXTHFLT) Draft[ ] the CINCEUR supporting plans to the CINCSTRIKE[ ]plans). There was a temporary bonus capability in that the INTREPID was still with TF 60 in the Eastern Mediterranean as a third carrier. There was a shortfall in

[1]Memorandum for the Director, Joint Staff, from the Director of Plans and Policy, 26 May 1967, SECRET.

the Fleet Amphibious force -- the Marine BLT had only three companies instead of four and no helicopters. Nevertheless, [ ] and [ ] were considered ready to execute. No modifications or changes in concept were necessary. Phase II forces would come from CINCLANT, and he would be commenting on that.

(S) TF 60 (3 carriers and groups) was now at sea and ready to conduct operations. TF 61/62 (amphibious squadron with Marine BLT embarked) was due to arrive in Malta on 29 May for a scheduled visit. This force could be under way on six hours notice and ready to land in designated Middle East objective areas approximately 72 hours later. As the Marines moved ashore, the airborne brigade from CONUS would be expected to be landing simultaneously at designated locations in the Middle East. Naval air from three carriers was adequate to provide initial close support for these forces.

(S) There was a caveat in CINCEUR's message. He felt that if EUCOM forces were used overtly in any military action, it would invite increased Soviet pressure in the CINCEUR area. Lines of communication from Germany would be lengthened in the event France denied overflights, and time delays plus increased aerial refueling requirements must be expected. Should such requirements involve degradation of the U.S. NATO posture, these must be measured against the risks involved. CINCEUR could not at the moment measure the extent of the degradation involved.[1]

(S) CINCLANT's comments followed. He reported that shortfalls in capabilities were such that short of mobilization, the forces available, without unduly weakening our position in other vital areas, limited our capability effectively to conduct military operations in the Middle East to a show of force, evacuation of civilians, air and naval support by the Sixth Fleet. Ground forces readily available to CINCLANT were insufficient to exert a significant influence within the

[1]CINCEUR to JCS, 281655Z May 1967, SECRET.

time wherein such influence would be of decisive value. However, the striking power of the Sixth Fleet alone was sufficient to assure air superiority,[1]

(S) CINCSTRIKE's reply to the JCS on the 29th entered a strong plea for complete impartiality. He expressed concern that the U.S. was now in a situation where it could lose influence in the area while the Soviet gained influence. The U.S. therefore should adhere to strict neutrality and eschew open support of Israel. The real significance of the Middle East was in the cold war context, the U.S. versus Soviet Union context, and the U.S. position should be based upon these considerations rather than local issues. Only as a last resort should U.S. unilateral military action take place and then only to terminate the fighting. U.N. association was needed early in order to provide a basis for subsequent U.S. actions designed to turn the Arabs away from the Soviets.

(S) In STRIKE's view the UAR deployments were primarily defensive in nature. The Israeli posture was probably predicated upon a quick strike offensive capability.

(S) STRIKE recommended that any military action taken by the U.S. should be taken early in the fighting and should ensure that territorial integrity of the countries involved is restored. The timing of intervention should be predicated upon who is winning at the time of intervention. In the early stages the Israelis should be able to penetrate deeply into UAR territory. Intervention at this point could be based on humanity, but Nasser would have been losing and Soviet influence would suffer a reverse.

(S) It might be difficult, STRIKE suggested, to determine conclusively which side started major hostilities, but the U.S. response

[1] CINCLANT to JCS, 281718Z May 1967, SECRET.

should be the same. [ ] were similar in concept and could be adapted to provide the non-aligned force described in this message.

(S) Any intervention should take the form of show of force operations coupled with warnings to both sides. Failure of these warnings should bring air and naval action to stabilize the situation. Enforced grounding of aviation of both sides plus attacks on all moving armor or active artillery should effect the desired cease fire. After the cease fire, the U.S. ground forces could be introduced for peace-keeping purposes. Reconstitution of territorial integrity should be vigorously undertaken through diplomatic means, using military forces to achieve that end only to the degree that it was absolutely necessary. If diplomacy failed and U.S. intervention, in the form of military action, were directed, consideration should be given to the execution of [ ] with such modification as necessary because of shortfalls of MEAFSA forces.[1]

(S) The three unified commanders had all agreed that military intervention of the sort suggested was highly problematical, both politically and operationally. Their cautious attitude toward U.S. military involvement was, as has been seen earlier, shared by the top military command.

(TS) STRIKE continued over the next several days to hammer at the problem of base rights as his prime operational constraint. On 1 June he suggested to the JCS some revisions in [ ] s a result of the problems of routing and overflight rights. Availability of bases in Cyprus, both for the operation of tactical fighter/recce aircraft and to launch to an airhead was critical. For example, if Cyprus were not available, the equivalent of five tactical fighter squadrons and two recce elements would be required from naval forces afloat. Airlift for the initial and the follow-on ground forces would increase significantly, but would vary according to the final staging base obtained.

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[1] CINCSTRIKE to JCS, 291945Z May 1967, SECRET.

(TS) STRIKE envisaged that if approval were given for the preferred route -- Lages (Azores)-Malta-Cyprus -- the deployment would be accomplished in several steps:

a. Deploy maximum forces commensurate with AFSTRIKE/MAC airlift to Cyprus.

b. Upon offloading of the employment AFSTRIKE aircraft at Cyprus, return them to Malta or Greece.

c. Continue to recycle aircraft not schedule for employment until the force had closed on Cyprus.

d. Deploy AFSTRIKE fighters to Lages and leap frog them on to Malta/Greece/Cyprus as the situation relating to base saturation permits.

e. Upon completion of rigging, deploy assault airborne elements into the objective area under cover of the Sixth Fleet.

f. Deploy AFSTRIKE fighters into the objective area as soon as the situation permits in order to relieve naval air forces.

(TS) To support this scheme, STRIKE requested the latest JCS assessment as to base availability. He also stated his assumption that additional naval fighter support would be available were Cyprus denied. STRIKE had directed his components to begin revising their plans on a basis of two possible situations, the preferred route and staging base was available; Greek bases were available and naval tactical fighter/recce forces afloat would be available in lieu of USAF fighter/recce forces during the initial deployment phase.[1]

(S) Two days later, STRIKE made another effort in behalf of Cypriot and Turkish bases. Clearly he was out to impress Washington with the vital necessity for obtaining such base rights beforehand if any action in the area were being contemplated. Referring to a SecState message of the day before concerning Turkish consent to base use, CINCSTRIKE stated that his earlier messages had assumed base rights in Turkey would not be available. Under these conditions any

[1]CINCSTRIKE to JCS, 012330Z June 1967, TOP SECRET.

final staging base other than Cyprus would seriously affect U.S. AF fighter employment. While inability to use Cyprus would not degrade employment of his airlift capability to the same degree the fighter capability would suffer, the longer leg which would have to be flown would decrease reaction capability and appreciably increase the length of time required to close a force if recycling were required.

(S) STRIKE pointed out that, assuming a 300-mile unrefueled combat radius for fighters, fighters operating from Cyprus could cover all the likely areas of fighting except Sharm-el Sheikh. Unrefueled fighters operating from Incirlik could cover the area as far south as Jerusalem. Operations from all other possible bases, except those within the combatant countries, would require a considerable number of refueling aircraft.

(S) The degree of reduction in capability to generate refueled fighter sorties, compared to unrefueled fighter sorties, would be governed by a number of variable factors. However, from the standpoint of flying time alone, a combat sortie from Soudha Bay would take almost twice as much time as a combat sortie from Cyprus. It was perfectly clear that operating from any base other than Cyprus would impose considerable degradation on U.S. fighter capability.

(S) The message then recalled that both CINCSTRIKE and CINCEUR had long considered Incirlik a major base and source of supply for contingency operations in the Middle East. For this purpose the facilities provided were unrivaled elsewhere in the area. Although the primary base for fighter operations should be Cyprus, the right to use Incirlik as a supply base and alternate fighter base (it being the best alternate available) would be of inestimable value.

(S) CINCSTRIKE concluded his appeal by recommending strongly that negotiations be undertaken on a priority basis for the U.S. use of Akrotiri and Nicosia airfields in Cyprus and Incirlik in Turkey, if required to terminate a Middle East war.[1]

[1] CINCSTRIKE to JCS, 031736Z June 1967, SECRET.

(TS) A new dimension to unilateral planning was added on 1 June in a directive from the CJCS to the Director Joint Staff. The CJCS recalled that the Israelis on recent occasions had raised the issue of combined military planning, and had been advised that no such planning was authorized or contemplated for the immediate future. However, such a possibility could not be ruled out. Therefore, he desired that the Joint Staff prepare a concept of operations for the execution of U.S. military operations in support of Israel, based upon the assumptions: (1) that active hostilities had broken out between Israel and the UAR; (2) that the U.S. had made the decision to support Israel overtly.

(TS) For a first look the Staff was to limit itself to the forces presently in place or available in the Mediterranean/Red Sea area. Herein lay the distinction with the existing STRIKE 531 plans which involved deployment of troops from the U.S. The CJCS was particularly interested in the method by which we would coordinate military operations with the Israelis. The Chairman wanted the concept developed within the Staff and not distributed outside the Staff at that time. Curiously, the directive indicated no time limit for delivery of the concept.[1]

(TS) The background to this request is unknown. It would appear to represent a precautionary step, in the unlikely event that the Israelis needed assistance and when overall political constraints prevented the U.S. from deploying troops to the Middle East from outside the area.

(TS) The effort was undertaken within J-3 and by 5 June a buff J-3 report was ready. It stressed heavily the limiting factors in such an operation -- base, port, staging and overflight rights, shortfalls in forces and readiness; availability of air refueling; air/sea lift; Israeli logistic capability; effect on the NATO

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[1]CM 2386-67, 1 June 1967, TOP SECRET.

strategic posture. Since the paper was still in preparation at the outbreak of hostilities, it had clearly been overtaken by events and was not pursued to a formal completion.[1]

(~~TS~~) However, the several lines of JCS and unified command planning endeavor came together in a JCS memorandum for the SecDef, dated 6 June, the day following the outbreak of the war. The paper was a review of the effects of possible U.S. military actions in the Middle East. The situations postulated were that, with hostilities in progress: Israel was winning; the Arabs were winning; operations were stalemated.

(~~TS~~) The views of the JCS were in support of what they conceived U.S. interests in the Middle East to be:

1. Keep further Soviet influence out of the area.
2. Protect NATO's southern flank.
3. Preserve the independence and territorial integrity of the nations of the Middle East.
4. Restore political and economic stability.
5. Assure the uninterrupted flow of Middle East oil to the Free World.
6. Influence the political orientation of the Middle East nations toward the Free World at a minimum, restore the level of U.S. influence in moderate Arab lands.
7. Support appropriate courses of action in the U.N. or adopt courses of action of our own to prevent or put a stop to armed aggression.
8. Accomplish a lasting accommodation between Israel and the Arab states.

(~~TS~~) The JCS recognized that: (1) U.S. political, military, and economic interests were extensive but difficult to support because of deep-seated antagonisms; (2) Western Europe had a relatively greater dependence than the U.S. on oil resources of the area. Therefore,

[1] J-3 Concept of Operations in Support of Israel, 5 June 1967, TOP SECRET.

any Arab-imposed political and economic leverages would influence Western Europe more than the U.S.; (3) the U.S. should seek means of arresting and reversing Nasser's rising stature and control of the Arab world, without serious damage to U.S. interests and while denying to the Soviet Union a basis for increasing their influence and support of Arab countries: [redacted]

[redacted] (5) a state of war had existed between Israel and the UAR since before the armistice of 1956, and hostilities were again in progress; (6) with respect to JCSM-310-67, 2 June (Military Actions - Strait of Tiran), the issue of passage in the Gulf of Aqaba and Strait had been altered by the resumption of hostilities. The UAR had claimed entitlement, under international law, to use force to stop passage of maritime traffic through the Straits into the Gulf, but the U.S. should not at this time become involved in any attempt to break the blockade.

(TS) The JCS also recognized the significance of the Soviet involvement in the situations postulated above. Overall Soviet intentions in the Middle East appeared to be to exploit the radical nationalist and anti-Western political forces in order to deny the region to Western political, economic, and military interests. The Soviets also aimed at winning a significant degree of political influence over the governments which these political forces now control or may control in future. Considerations which would most heavily influence Soviet reactions in the Middle East were:

a. The Soviets probably did not want a major confrontation/ war with the U.S.

b. Soviet policy at present was to dissolve the security ties of NATO. Threats or hostile action by Soviet-sponsored initiatives in Europe would revive a sense of common peril, thus solidifying rather than dissolving the fabric of the alliance. Also, Soviet actions aimed at establishing real domination in the Mediterranean would eventually alarm the European states.

c. The Soviets were unlikely to enter upon commitments and risks which they could not control themselves.

d. The Soviets would find it difficult to operate forces effectively in an area not contiguous to the USSR.

e. Military and economic aid and political backing were the primary instruments available to the USSR for use in the Middle East.

f. [redacted]

(TS) The Chiefs declared that the review had demonstrated that serious risks might attend each course of U.S. action. They therefore formally recommended that:

1. The U.S. not participate in any military operations, unilateral or multilateral at this time which would tend to identify the U.S. with either Israel or the Arabs.

2. The U.S. continue to work through the U.N. and other multinational and bilateral diplomatic channels, including contingency consultation with the Soviet Union to end hostilities.

3. Logistics support for all belligerents to be suspended at this time.

(TS) Annexes to the paper examined the three postulated situations and a matrix for each, presenting U.S. courses of action (no U.S. military intervention, military intervention on behalf of the Arabs via U.N. force, multinational force, unilateral U.S. force), selected operational considerations, advantages and disadvantages of each to

the U.S., U.S. interests in each Middle East country, U.S. security assurances to Middle Eastern countries (generalized, and specific for Israel, Saudi Arabia, Jordan).[1]

(TS) With this paper, military planning at the JCS level ended, with the exception of the brief flurry on 10 June under totally different ground rules. With each passing study the operational difficulties of undertaking military action in the area had been made more manifest. The JCS had made abundantly clear their reluctance to become involved in the Middle East with U.S. military operations, a position they had consistently held since the crisis began.

[1]JCSM-315-67, 6 June 1967, TOP SECRET.

VII. OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES

(U) As May drew to a close, events seemed inexorably moving toward a collision. On the 28th Nasser had ruled out any negotiated peace in the Middle East until the Arabs had regained Palestine. The next day he announced a pledge by the Soviet Union to guarantee an Egyptian blockade of the Gulf and to prevent outside interference, a statement followed the next day by the deployment of ten more Soviet warships to the Mediterranean.

(S) The U.S. viewed the Soviet military move as a calculated show of force for political purposes, to allow the Arabs to harden their stand. Nevertheless, the U.S. recognized that the presence of the Soviet force would increase the already apparent reluctance of the maritime states to join in concerted action.

(S) However, by this time the U.S. was itself displaying growing caution. Very late on the 31st the SecDef and the Deputy SecDef had discussed a request from the President for recommendations on what could be done with the Sixth Fleet to counteract the Russian move. The Deputy SecDef felt anything we could do would be fraught with danger. Moves such as deploying the Fleet further south or joining them to the Amphibious Force would only increase tensions and give false signals. The SecDef suggested, as a possibility, that the INTREPID be held in the Red Sea and the fact be announced, carrying the implications of a buildup. He felt moving the Sixth Fleet around would be unproductive as compared to the locating of a carrier and three destroyers directly in the problem area of the Gulf.

(S) This recommendation, tentative as it was intended to be, was then sent over to W. Rostow at the White House.[1]

[1] EA Tapes, 010101Z June 1967.

(U) On the 30th Egypt and Jordan entered a military alliance committing Jordan to attack Israel if the latter attempted to break the blockade. The collapse of Hussein's moderating influence and the dutiful falling into line of all the Arab states represented apparently clear evidence to the Israelis that, whatever Nasser's original intentions, he now had the capability to launch an attack on three fronts against them.

(U) By the beginning of June it had become public knowledge that the U.S. was encountering serious difficulty in organizing international action. On the 1st Rusk publicly ruled out unilateral U.S. action on the blockade. The next day Prime Minister Wilson flew to Washington, warning in a press statement that the crisis could lead to general war. However, like the U.S., the Prime Minister was careful not to assert that a blockade had actually been established yet, clearly in order to give Nasser an opportunity to back down without a test.

It was now obvious that the U.S. was being forced, through its failure to achieve concerted action, to reduce its objectives to a simple declaration by the maritime states in support of the principle of free passage in the Gulf. Despite the fact that the U.S. was privately continuing its unilateral planning, it was daily becoming more evident that forceful unilateral or combined actions such as those contemplated would become less politically possible as time passed. In short, the U.S. felt that all political alternatives, both within and outside of the U.N., had to be exhausted before any unilateral or bilateral stronger measures were taken, but, as has been pointed out, the very passage of time necessary to exhaust these political alternatives made it less and less likely that further measures would or could be attempted. On the 1st a State Department spokesman, replying to a question in regard to the progress the U.S. and U.K. were making on getting an agreed position on access to the Gulf, gave a vague and clearly evasive reply, saying the focus of effort was the

U.N. The Israelis had long since made clear to us that they put no faith whatsoever in the U.N.

(S) Another element operative in the situation and tending to dampen U.S. forthrightness was the discovery that the legal case we thought we had over the international character of the Strait was not as unequivocal as we had previously considered it. This, of course, was a central factor in our whole case and the series of actions we were proposing.[1]

(S) The feeling in Washington in the opening days of June, was reported in the press, that the threat of war was diminishing, was seen to be reflected in the U.S. willingness to let the INTREPID pass through the Canal. In the same vein, the JCS on the 2nd, cancelling its instructions of 27 May to maintain TF 60 intact at sea, informed CINCEUR that in view of the possible protracted duration of the crisis, it would be well to take advantage of the current period of political negotiations to commence alternate in-port upkeep periods for TFs 60.1 and 60.2. CINCEUR was authorized to commence such in-port upkeep periods at Crete and Rhodes at his discretion. He was also warned that such periods might be curtailed on short notice.[2]

(S) Also reflective of the changing attitude was the discontinuance on 1 June of the daily 0700 NMCC Middle East situation report. The SITREP was reinstated the next day again but in a briefer form.

(U) The changing attitude, if there was one (and appearances here were important as distinguished from what we said privately), was not lost on the Israelis. On the 28th Eshkol had said Israel would not try to break the blockade immediately, but was relying on international action. Two days later Israel warned she would go it alone if international action were not forthcoming. On 1 June Dayan, the popular war hero, was named Minister of Defense, a move viewed as a concession by Eshkol to the proponents of stronger action.

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[1]Interview, J-5.

[2]JCS 6828 to CINCEUR, 021422Z June 1967, SECRET.

(S) The Israelis watched the development of solid military indicators. In the week after 23 May, the UAR had increased its forces in Sinai by seven divisions. Many of these forces were deployed too far forward to be considered deployed defensively. An Egyptian armored force was located in central Sinai in a position to strike across the Negev and to sever communications with Eilat. Then, on 4 June, after Hussein and Nasser compared their differences and Iraq had joined the defense pact, UAR and Iraqi forces moved into Jordan.

(S) These developments apparently finally outweighed the arguments against an Israeli preemptive strike, and the Israeli cabinet decided on war around noon on the 4th.

(U) The U.S. was caught between the hesitation and reluctance of the maritime states and the impatience of Israel. Nonetheless, the tension had seemed to subside somewhat by 4 June, an easing reflected in the major decline in news coverage of the crisis.[1] It may be that the U.S., encouraged by Israeli quiescence for three weeks, really was convinced that the situation would settle down to a long-term armed confrontation which would at least have the merit of providing time for renewed intensive diplomatic efforts (as well as for preparations for unlikely military operations).

(U) It was therefore with some surprise that State learned from the Embassy in Tel Aviv early on the 5th that the USDAO had been informed by the Israelis that fighting had begun between Egyptian and Israeli air and ground forces. The Israelis claimed the Egyptians had begun to advance on Israel.[2] Three hours later the American Consul in Jerusalem reported fierce fighting between Israeli and Jordanian forces.[3] An hour later Damascus radio announced that Syrian forces had entered the fight.[4]

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[1] There was a similar decline in the volume of high level telephone discussion of the crisis.

[2] Amemb Tel Aviv to SecState, 050631Z June 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.

[3] Amconsul Jerusalem to SecState, 050944Z June 1967, UNCLASSIFIED.

[4] Amemb Damascus to SecState, 051032Z June 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.

A. THE EFFECT ON THE U.S.

(U) The first day of the war was one of information gathering by the U.S. command authorities. We were almost totally dependent on the Israelis for military information on the fighting but they freely admitted their intention to give us as little as possible for security reasons. On the political side, State was flooded by cables from the dozen Arab countries involved, plus numerous others from Malaysia to Mauritania where sympathies lay with the Arabs. Reports of conversations with ministers and kings, press coverage, and assessments and recommendations poured in. It was a confusing mass of data, but in volume was actually less than in other recent crises, probably because the U.S. was not directly involved. However, U.S. policy makers had to spread their attention over a vastly wider field than in all but the gravest previous crises.

(S) However, before the first day had ended, it had become clear that the Israelis had won a stunning victory, annihilating the Arab air forces by a swift preemptive strike. By the end of the second day a ground victory of similar proportions over the UAR and Jordanian armies was becoming evident. Early on the 6th Hussein called in the ambassadors of the U.S., U.K., France, and the USSR and begged them to arrange a cease fire, admitting his total defeat.[1]

(S) During the first part of 5 June, there was considerable interest among the U.S. command authorities in establishing just which side opened hostilities.

The SecDef repeatedly tried to pin down the facts, but the scarcity of information (despite direct telephonic communication with the Embassy in Tel Aviv) and the conflicting character of what was available rendered such efforts to no avail. The SecDef, Deputy SecDef, and senior U.S. military officers sur-

[1]Amemb Amman to State, 061037Z June 1967, SECRET.

mised the truth, however, that the Israelis had indeed preempted. However, this assumption could not yet be stated as a fact. The Sec-Def told the CJCS in the afternoon that neither CIA nor DIA had any information yet on what had happened.[1]

(S) However, the matter of who fired the first shot soon became academic in light of the magnitude and speed (an especially important factor) of the Israeli success, and the issue was quietly dropped.

(S) The Israeli success removed one whole category of problems from the American back. The issue of possible U.S. involvement over the Strait of Tiran passed away as Israeli troops seized the whole Sinai Peninsula. So did the possibility, however remote, of U.S. intervention to assist the Israelis against the Arabs. However, the Israeli success raised the new problem of stopping the fighting as soon as possible before it spread, specifically, before the Arab defeat became so catastrophic that the Soviets might be tempted or even feel compelled to become involved in support of the Arabs. In short, the Israelis had disarmed the three most dangerous and immediately threatening enemies, and the U.S., not knowing what Israeli objectives were, now felt that it was necessary to limit that success to reasonable bounds.

(S) Nevertheless, it was with an understandable sense of relief that the U.S. saw the unfolding events after the 5th. The entire set of pre-war crisis problems, save that of Soviet involvement, ceased to be relevant.

(S) The official U.S. position was sent out by State in a circular telegram during the morning of the 5th. The U.S. position was to restrain all parties and to restore peace. The U.S. position in the U.N. would be to call on all powers, especially the major powers, to stay out of the situation. The new developments might, however,

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[1]EA Tapes, 5 June 1967.

offer the opportunity to reinsert the U.N. presence into the area. All posts in Arab countries additionally were warned to take precautions against violence.[1]

(U) The British Ambassador in Washington relayed a question from the British Foreign Secretary to the SecState regarding the steps the U.S. was going to take. In reply, the SecState told him that he thought it quite possible to get a Security Council resolution calling for a cease fire. Also we had told the Soviets that we were astonished and had had no inkling of the outbreak from either side. We had thought we had commitments from both sides not to start anything.

B. HIGH LEVEL EXCHANGES WITH THE SOVIETS

(U) Since our concern over the Soviet role in the crisis was always keen, one of our very first moves was to express our thoughts to them. As soon as definitive information that major hostilities had indeed begun was available to us, the SecState, early on the 5th sent a message to Foreign Minister Gromyko. The message expressed our astonishment and dismay at the turn of events, stating that "as you know, we have been making the maximum effort to prevent this situation." We had been expecting a very high level Egyptian delegation on Wednesday.

We felt it important that the Security Council succeed in quickly ending the fighting and we were ready to cooperate with all Council members to that end.

(S) At 1150Z on the 5th the Hot Line from Moscow in the NMCC suddenly came to life. At 1210Z a brief message from Premier Kosygin concerning the crisis came through. The President's reply followed within the hour. The following day at 1056Z another message from Kosygin came over the Molink. There was another Soviet message at 2207Z on the 6th and a fourth on the morning of the 7th. In all there were seven messages from the Soviets over the Hot Line between the 5th and 10th of June. An extremely

[1]State to all Poste Circular Telegram, 051144Z June 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.

tight security lid was clamped down on the exchange and a NODIS label put on the messages. (Their existence was revealed to the public, however, within a few weeks, specifically after leaks about the exchange deriving from the meeting between the President and Chairman Kosygin at Glassboro, New Jersey, in late June.)

(S) It would be difficult to assess the real significance of the exchange. It was greater in the non-specific sense, in that it represented the first use of the Hot Line which was clearly recognized by both principals as a useful mechanism. In terms of the resolution of the crisis, however, the significance is less clear. The Soviets in the U.N. took a most adamant stand on behalf of the Arabs, compromising their all-out support not a bit in the general interests of a solution. The U.S. hope or even possibly expectation that the Soviets would publicly join the U.S. in a peace resolution which treated all combatants alike was disappointed, as the Soviets hewed to an anti-Israeli line and a demand that Israel be branded an aggressor.

C. THE FALSE INTERVENTION CHARGE

(S) An unexpected element of danger appeared in the very first hours of the war, which was to complicate seriously the U.S. position and policy thereafter. The Embassy in Amman early on the 5th reported to State on the meeting called by Hussein at 0730 local time to announce that Jordan was at war. Hussein also had claimed that Jordanian radar had picked up the arrival of sixteen aircraft at an Israeli airfield. Eight of these, he asserted, had taken off from an aircraft carrier twenty miles west of Tel Aviv and eight more from a carrier eighty miles west of Tel Aviv. Hussein did not know if these aircraft had taken part in the fighting nor had they been identified.

(S) The Embassy urgently requested any information State might have on these planes.[1]

[1] Amemb Amman to State, 050930Z June 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.

(C) The Commander, Sixth Fleet, replied directly to the Embassy a short time later, to the effect that no Sixth Fleet carriers had been closer than 400 miles to Israel during the current situation. During all the period, no aircraft from the Fleet carriers had flown closer than 300 miles to Israel.[1]

(C) Before this message had arrived, the Embassy in Jordan reported further that the Jordanian Chief of Staff had just called to claim that the unidentified aircraft had taken part in the bombing of UAR targets. The Ambassador said he could not urge too strongly that the business be clarified at once. If these reports got to the Arab streets, he feared violence against Americans would result. He wanted to be able to convey a categoric assurance to the Jordanian Government that no U.S. military aircraft had been involved in the hostilities, and he would have to confirm or deny whether American aircraft had landed in Israel, and if so, why.[2]

(C) The rumors soon spread all over the Arab world and in a form which specifically charged that British and U.S. planes had engaged with the Israeli in the attacks. At 2139Z the Cairo Embassy also urgently requested a top level denial of the rumor.[3] By the end of the day Embassies throughout the Arab world were under increasingly severe pressure, and all were urging a major U.S. effort to deny and refute the rumors.

(C) E

It was patently a device designed to serve several purposes: to explain away the stunning success of the Israeli Air Force, to rally their people against the "imperialists," and, most ominous, to involve the Soviets.

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[1]ComSixth Fleet to Amemb, Amman, 050944Z June 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.
[2]Amemb Amman to State, 050950Z June 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.
[3]Amemb Cairo to State, 052139Z June 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.

(U) An odd coincidence served the Arabs well. There had been just recently published the memoirs of a member of the British Government during the Suez crisis of 1956, in which details of the Anglo-French collusion with the Israelis were revealed. The Arab press and Arab representatives at the U.N. relied heavily upon the coincidence, pointing out that despite U.S. and British denials of intervention, history would eventually prove the truth of the allegations, as it had for the Suez war.

(S) Repeated U.S. denials were persistently ignored and the fabrication mushroomed into one of the two main pillars of the Arab case, the other being that the Israelis were the aggressors. Formal U.S. diplomatic denials seemed so utterly unavailing that the Commander, Sixth Fleet, suggested an ingenious expedient to NAVEUR on the 6th. He suggested that we refer the Arabs to the Soviets, since Soviet ships had been shadowing the movements of the carriers continuously. The Soviet ships could confirm that the carriers had remained at least 200 miles from Egypt, Israel, and Syria. The elaborate electronic equipment of these ships could confirm that no aircraft from U.S. carriers had flown toward the combat area during the conflict.[1]

(U) It is not known for certain whether the suggestion was acted on, but indications are that it was.

(S) The subject was further pursued later that day when the JCS directly queried the Commander, Sixth Fleet, advising him that UAR authorities claimed to have information that U.S. personnel were talking to the Israelis or were otherwise in communication with the Israelis. The JCS requested that the Sixth Fleet verify that no communications or other contact had occurred between aircraft or any other elements of the Fleet and the Israelis. If there had been communications, the fullest details were requested. Of equal interest

[1] ComSixth Fleet to NAVEUR, 061037Z June 1967, SECRET.

to the JCS would be any information that could be provided as to any Israeli attempts to get the Fleet to intervene in the war, inasmuch as there had been UAR allegations as to this.[1]

(S) The Sixth Fleet denied that there had been any communications, direct or indirect, between the Fleet and any Israeli military or nonmilitary source, and none reported by Fleet subordinate commands. The only tests conducted had been for the new communications equipment in the Embassy at Tel Aviv.[2]

(U) The results of the fabrication were farreaching. By 6 June, the second day of the war, Algeria, the UAR, Syria, Sudan, and Yemen had broken relations with the U.S. because of it. On that same day Kuwait and Algeria banned all oil shipments to the U.S. and the U.K., while Iraq stopped oil flow through the tap line to the loading facilities on the Persian Gulf. Eventually Iraq and Mauritania also severed diplomatic relations with us.

(U) Above all, the falsehood put in jeopardy the lives and property of U.S. citizens still in the area, as mobs found a convenient outlet for their rage, a rage that grew in vehemence as awareness of the Arab military catastrophe began to spread by the middle of the week.

D. U.S. MILITARY ACTIONS

(S) As part of our position, there was an effort made to maintain a complete standfast for all forces in the Mediterranean area. Early on the 5th CINCEUR had directed NAVEUR to move the Marines of the Sixth Fleet out of Malta to the east. When this information was given the DJS, he immediately asked that the move be cancelled. Sailing notice for the Marines was reduced, however, from four hours to two.[3]

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[1]JCS 7239 to ComSixth Fleet, 070259Z June 1967, SECRET.
[2]ComSixth Fleet to JCS, 070626Z, June 1967, SECRET.
[3]EA Tapes, 5 June 1967.

The Sixth Fleet fast carrier task force was directed to exploit its mobility to make it more difficult for the Soviets to obtain intelligence on Fleet movements and to improve the U.S. posture for accomplishing any directed tasks. Task Force 60 was to operate in the Aegean-Eastern Mediterranean, no closer than 100 miles from the coast of Lebanon, Syria, Israel and the UAR. The restriction on Cyprus, however, was reduced to twenty-five miles.[1]

At the suggestion of NAVEUR, CINCEUR, early on the 6th, informed the JCS that the scheduled port visit of TF 61/62 (the Amphibious Force) at Malta was due to terminate on the following day. Because the schedule was known to the local authorities, CINCEUR proposed that the force be sailed on schedule, in order to avoid arousing speculation over an extension. The force would assume normal operations, staying well clear of sensitive areas and moving to the Eastern Mediterranean to be in a position to support with minimum delay the evacuation of U.S. nationals if directed.[2]

However, the JCS disapproved the move, and CINCEUR directed NAVEUR that day not to sail the Amphibious Force from Malta but to maintain a four-hour steaming time.[3]

While the initial military moves were negative, to avoid giving any appearance of U.S. intervention, a current of positive actions soon developed. These primarily concerned preparations for a possible implementation of Military Evacuation Plan "BRISK POINT" [redacted] This was a CINCSTRIKE plan, and STRIKE immediately began to take steps for action. One of its first moves was to request from the JCS permission to deploy a JACC/CP 130 (Jackpot) aircraft forward to the area of possible operations, suggesting that the plane and a four man advance element of the Joint Task Force deploy to the Azores, initially on a routine training flight. The plane would hold at Lages,

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[1]CINCEUR SITREP to AIG 930, 052400Z June 1967, SECRET.
[2]CINCEUR to JCS, 061126Z June 1967, SECRET.
[3]CINCEUR to NAVEUR, ComSixth Fleet, 062125Z June 1967, SECRET.

pending clearance to Incirlik. CINCSTRIKE's purpose was to establish an advance communications capability at Incirlik and to arrange for the follow-on of the JTF HQ and airlift force.[1]

(S) The JCS authorized movement of the Jackpot to Lages on the 6th[2] and, after two days of hesitation, from Lages to Athens on the 8th.[3]

(S) However, command arrangements for the Middle East and in particular were to undergo a sudden change.

(S) It will be recalled that [ ] was a CINCSTRIKE plan, and CINCSTRIKE, in his CINCMEAFSA role, was responsible for U.S. operations in the Middle East. However, CINCEUR had responsibility for the North African coast from Morocco to the Egypt-Libya frontier. The geographical division of jurisdiction had been drawn up under the assumption that the Eastern and Western halves of the Middle East could be reasonably divided, in view of the factious nature of the Arab world. The circumstance which had arisen, namely, the unity of the Arab world over the Israel issue, had not been foreseen or considered likely.[4] The apparent unity of the Arabs now transformed the military problem for the U.S. If evacuation operations were to be conducted under [ ] as it stood, two unified commands would be involved, with their lines of communication cutting across each other.

(S) Deputy CINCEUR had been, from the start of the war, urging a general compulsory evacuation, his belief being that the sooner it could be done, the better. The longer we waited, the greater would be the problems involved once the decision was made. The confusion

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[1]CINCSTRIKE to JCS, 051953Z June 1967, SECRET.
[2]JCS 7188 to CINCSTRIKE, 061947Z June 1967, SECRET.
[3]JCS 7353 to CINCSTIKE, 081354Z June 1967, SECRET.
[4] [

which had occurred over the Wheelus evacuation (see next section) as a consequence of the Ambassador's poll taking among the U.S. residents seemed to emphasize Deputy CINCEUR's point.

Allied with this point of view was another. Both Deputy CINCEUR and CINCUSNAVEUR felt that the Soviet naval "challenge" should not be overlooked and that the apparent U.S. policy of neutralizing the Mediterranean during the fighting would, in the long run, prove to be a seriously damaging one. NAVEUR had requested CINCEUR, during the morning of the 5th, immediately to divert an ASW carrier group en route to the NOREUR/EASTLANT area and scheduled to remain in that area until 18 July, thence to the Mediterranean on 21 July. The diversion was to counter the significant increase in Soviet submarines in the inland sea. CINCEUR approved the diversion, subject to JCS approval,[1] but this request was not immediately answered.

(S) Around noon on the 6th Deputy CINCEUR called the Vice DJS to inform him of a forthcoming message in which he expressed EUCOM readiness to assume responsibility for the evacuation as presently outlined in [ ] If the JCS approved, the JTF generally as contained in the STRIKE plan should be deployed to a location which he would recommend. EUCOM would need direct coordination with STRIKE to establish the composition of the JTF, since they would contemplate providing a EUCOM JTF commander and certain key staff. Also they would recommend deployment composition, and timing for the initial and the follow-on supporting elements. EUCOM would plan on providing the tactical fighter squadrons and recce elements. Additionally, they were prepared to provide for shortfalls in the initial and follow-on elements as required.

Since it was likely that Americans and U.S. facilities throughout the Middle East would become the targets of Arab frustration and the fanatical rantings of Radio Cairo, CINCEUR felt that early implementation of his recommendation seemed prudent. Essential

[1] CINCEUR to NAVEUR, 051605Z June 1967, TOP SECRET.

assets should be prepositioned as rapidly as possible in order to react to fast moving situations. Several embassies, for example, had indicated expectations of serious trouble and had suggested implementation of BRISK POINT.

As an added suggestion but not to delay expeditious U.S. unilateral action as required, CINCEUR suggested that consideration should be given to U.N. sponsorship of emergency evacuation of all noncombatants, with pledges of assistance by all countries in the form of guarantees of safety for all identified means of evacuation, both military and civilian.

In consonance with the other recommendations and to achieve maximum readiness, CINCEUR further recommended: (1) the immediate deployment of two tactical airlift squadrons to the European theater (for planning purposes they were using Athens and Aviano as destinations, although other bases were under consideration); (2) the immediate deployment of an AGC to the Mediterranean to provide adequate control for possible over-the-beach evacuation operations; (3) the diversion of the ESSEX ASW hunter-killer group en route to the North Sea to the Mediterranean (it was felt that such a move would serve quiet notice to the Soviets that the U.S. would not tolerate any interference with our operations); (4) the immediate sailing of the Amphibious Force from Malta into the Eastern Mediterranean to the general area of Crete so that there would be equipment and hull capacity available for over-the-beach evacuation.[1]

The CINCEUR move caused more than a little surprise at STRIKE, since the first inkling they had of any change in the command structure was an information copy of CINCEUR's message to the JCS. STRIKE's reaction was that EUCOM was unnecessarily involving itself, and that the "putting in of a substitute for an expert" at the very moment of crisis was, to say the least, unwise.

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[1]CINCEUR to JCS, 062025Z June 1967, SECRET

(S) The resolution of the jurisdictional issue was settled on a basis of political considerations. Responsibility for peaceful evacuation was given to CINCEUR, to be carried out by his airlift capability. Any troops that were required in a non-peaceful evacuation would be sent from STRIKE and would be under STRIKE's control and command. The political intention of this arrangement was to give absolutely no hint, at this stage at least, that the U.S. was moving any military forces toward the area. For peaceful evacuation by air, first priority was to be by civilian air, with EUCOM military airlift where unavoidable.[1]

(S) Revision of the original BRISK POINT plan was also probably necessitated by an urgent cable from the Ambassador in Turkey, who had not seen a copy of BRISK POINT until early on the 5th. He reminded State that he had personally told USCINCSTRIKE on 25 May that it was unlikely that the Turks would permit use of Incirlik for the introduction of U.S. armed forces into the Middle East. A hasty review of the plan led him to conclude that even under the expectation of peaceful evacuation, the employment, as called for in the plan, of U.S. airborne units and tactical fighter squadrons was not consistent with the probable Turkish understanding of activities necessary to the peaceful evacuation of U.S. citizens.[2]

(S) On the basis of telephone discussions, CINCEUR declared DEFCON 4 for U.S. Forces Europe for support of [ ] early on the 7th.[3] This was the first time since the Lebanon crisis of 1958 that U.S. forces in Europe had been alerted, under the U.S. alert system, for non-NATO purposes. NATO was not officially informed of this, although Ambassador Cleveland, U.S. Permanent Representative to the North Atlantic Council, was advised of the moves by the Deputy CINCEUR. (CINCEUR/SACEUR, General Lemnitzer, was in the U.S. during most of the crisis, leaving General Burchinal the senior commander).

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[1]JCS 7342 to CINCEUR and CINCSTRIKE, 071226Z June 1967, SECRET.
[2]Amemb Ankara to State, 051105Z June 1967, SECRET.
[3]CINCEUR to NAVEUR, USAREUR, USAFE, 070920Z June 1967, SECRET.

(S) A few hours later CINCEUR sent to the three component commands an initial draft outline of the EUCOM concept of operations for assuming the responsibilities and tasks just assigned by the JCS.

(S) STRIKE, therefore, was to continue to plan for military operations, standing by to take over any evacuation which required the use of troops. The solution seemed reasonable save for one aspect recognized by both unified commands. Presumably all the potential evacuations would start out peacefully and would then grow into situations requiring the use of force. With STRIKE denied authority to move any advance headquarters elements into the area before the actual need, it was clear that the price of the arrangement was an undesirable loss of responsiveness. Nor did the solution resolve the problem of two unified commands conducting simultaneous operations, both peaceful and non-peaceful, in the same area.[1]

(S) Nevertheless, STRIKE was mollified by the arrangement. As to CINCEUR's other recommendations, the JCS informed EUCOM that the interdepartmental Control Group was studying the best means to deal with the situation by nonmilitary means if possible. The JCS understood that the Control Group had agreed that prepositioning of military aircraft was desirable; however, no authority had been granted for any military evacuation other than Wheelus. Therefore, CINCEUR was to continue to preposition his aircraft at his own discretion.

(S) The JCS commented that CINCEUR's suggestion in regard to U.N. sponsorship of any evacuation had been passed to State.

(S) CINCEUR's recommended military deployments were all, save one, refused. The deployment of two tactical airlift squadrons could not be considered at this time because of the overriding requirement to keep STRIKE's capability intact for employment in contingencies calling for troops. In lieu of the requested units, MAC would provide twelve C-141s to CINCEUR to augment airlift available for evacuation.

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[1] EA tapes, 7 June 1967.

The deployment of the AGC was not contemplated either at the moment, inasmuch as evacuation, primarily by air, in a permissive environment under the protection of the host country seemed to be a more likely requirement than the application of amphibious forces in an over-the-beach evacuation. Finally, the diversion of the hunter-killer ASW group was considered to be a highly visible act at a time when policy desired not to show any increase in U.S. forces into the crisis area, especially in view of our loudly proclaimed peaceful intentions.

The JCS, however, did authorize the sailing of the Amphibious Force from Malta to continue a normal operations schedule. The Force was to clear Malta in a northerly or southerly direction until out of sight of land, after which operations were to be conducted out of sight of land in an area west of longitude 20°E. The scheduled port visit to Taranto was to be made.[1]

E. THE USS LIBERTY EPISODE

On the 8th occurred a tragic episode which produced the only U.S. casualties of the entire crises. The USS LIBERTY, a communications intelligence vessel under the dual control of DIA/NSA and Sixth Fleet, had been ordered by the JCS on 1 June to leave Rota on the 2nd and move to the eastern Mediterranean, there to conduct operations until 30 June. The ship was authorized to go within twelve and a half nautical miles of the UAR.[2]

On the 7th the JCS informed CINCEUR that the previous instructions for operating areas were for guidance only and could be varied as local conditions dictated. The closest point of approach to the UAR was increased to twenty nautical miles.[3] However, this message was almost immediately cancelled by another from the JCS at 0110Z on the 8th, directing that the LIBERTY operate not closer than

[1]JCS 7343 to CINCEUR, 072357Z June 1967, SECRET.
[2]JCS 6724 to CINCEUR, 011545Z June 1967, SECRET.
[3]JCS 7337 to CINCEUR, 072230Z June 1967, SECRET.

100 nautical miles to Syria, the UAR, and Israel.[1] While this latter message was directed to CINCEUR, the LIBERTY was listed as an addressee for copy.

(f) Apparently confusion arose in the period between the above messages as to the exact wishes of the JCS. At 2350Z on the 7th, seventy minutes after JCS 7337 had been sent, an officer of JRC called NAVEUR and directed that the LIBERTY comply with new operating instructions which would keep her no closer than 100 nautical miles to the belligerent coastline. This was a verbal directive with no date time group. NAVEUR called CINCEUR and requested them to call the JCS for a DTG on the instruction because a previous JCS message with change of instructions (JCS 7337) had just come in.

(f) At 0410Z on the 8th NAVEUR established a teletype conference with the Sixth Fleet Duty Officer and relayed the substance of JCS 7347, the latest revision which moved the closest point of approach out to 100 miles. This was followed half an hour later by a NAVEUR order to Sixth Fleet directing him to follow JCS 7347. However, it was not until 0917Z that the Sixth Fleet sent a message to the LIBERTY, directing her to remain 100 miles out.

(f) Apparently neither the Sixth Fleet order nor the information copy of JCS 7347 ever reached the LIBERTY. Later investigation proved that they had gone astray in the naval communications system.

(f) By the early hours of the 8th, the LIBERTY had moved to within thirteen miles of the coast of Sinai. At 0742Z the LIBERTY reported she had been orbited by two unidentified jet fighters at 0650Z.[2] At 1237Z she reported the approach of three unidentified gunboats.[3] The aircraft and gunboats began to attack the LIBERTY at 1245Z. The ship

[1]JCS 7347 to CINCEUR, 080110Z June 1967, TOP SECRET.
[2]LIBERTY to NAVEUR, 080742Z June 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.
[3]LIBERTY to NAVEUR, 081237Z June 1967, UNCLASSIFIED.

was hit by a torpedo and suffered a loss of thirty-four dead and some seventy wounded.

(U) Commander, Sixth Fleet informed NAVEUR at 1320Z that on receipt of the message from the LIBERTY at 1252Z that she was under attack, he had directed TF 60 to proceed toward the scene. Both the AMERICA and the SARATOGA had been directed to launch four attack aircraft with fighter cover to defend the LIBERTY. The estimated time of arrival of the first aircraft would be an hour and thirty minutes after launch, launch time estimated at 1345Z. (The general freeze on operational activity throughout the previous three days meant that aircraft had to be armed and prepared for operations after the order to go to the LIBERTY's assistance.)[1] The SecDef's authorization to use whatever force was necessary was relayed to CINCEUR by the DJS shortly thereafter. A JCS message to that effect followed at 1416Z.[2]

(U) In order to avoid any false impressions as a consequence of the Fleet's having suddenly sprung into action after three days of standfast, the command authorities deemed it advisable to send a message from the President to Chairman Kosygin over the Molink, informing the Russians of the actions we had taken and the reasons for them.

(S) At 1426Z Commander, Sixth Fleet informed CINCEUR that a message from the LIBERTY indicated that while the attacking units were still unidentified, helicopters which flew over the ship immediately after the attack were thought to be Israeli.[3] At 1414Z, however, the USDAO in Tel Aviv had flashed direct to the White House that the Israelis had admitted erroneously attacking the LIBERTY.[4]

(S) In view of this information which was also transmitted to the Fleet, the Com Sixth Fleet recalled all Fleet aircraft.[5] Following

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[1]Com Sixth Fleet to CINCEUR, 081320Z June 1967, UNCLASSIFIED.
[2]JCS 7354 to CINCEUR, 081416Z June 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.
[3]Com Sixth Fleet to CINCEUR, 081426Z June 1967, UNCLASSIFIED.
[4]USDAO Tel Aviv to White House, 081414Z June 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.
[5]Com Sixth Fleet to CINCEUR, 081439Z June 1967, UNCLASSIFIED.

a telecon with CINCEUR, the JCS directed discontuance of the use of force at 1529Z.[1]

(S) The LIBERTY continued under way, severely damaged, with assistance offered by Israeli vessels. Two destroyers were sent to her assistance and rendezvoused with the ship at 0425Z on the 9th.[2]

(U) A personal message of regrets and condolences was sent by Prime Minister Eshkol to the President early on the 9th.[3]

(S) It was later explained by the Israelis that they had mistaken the LIBERTY for an Egyptian vessel which previously had shelled Israeli forces operating in Sinai. While the attack showed a degree of impetuosity and recklessness, it was also clear that the presence of a U.S. naval vessel, unannounced, that close to belligerent shores at a time when we had made much of the fact that no U.S. military forces were moving near the area of hostilities was inviting disaster.[4]

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[1]JCS 7355 to CINCEUR, 081529Z June 1967, SECRET.

[2]Com Sixth Fleet to CINCEUR, 090513Z June 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.

[3]Amemb Tel Aviv to State, 090810Z June 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.

[4]The episode was later subjected to intensive investigation by the JCS and by a Naval Board of Inquiry. Because of security considerations, the affair has not been treated at length in this report, although, like the U-2 episode of 1960, it offers some pointed lessons.

VIII. THE EVACUATION OF THE MIDDLE EAST

(S) While the U.S. was making every effort to avoid involvement in the war, there arose in the very first hours of the war two episodes which provoked some consideration of the use of armed intervention in an Arab country. This was a result of events in Libya, specifically at the Embassy in Benghazi and at Wheelus AB. Wheelus had been the subject of much rumor in the three-week crisis preceding the outbreak of war, to the effect that it was being used to supply Israel. The Ambassador had suggested on 1 June several steps to reduce the "visibility" of the American presence, such as revised landing patterns for fighters. However, he pointed out that there were strict limitations to the degree to which non Wheelus-based transport aircraft could be expected to use such eccentric approaches. There was also a limit on night flying and transport aircraft which provided the basis for rumors.[1]

(S) By 1130Z on the 5th Wheelus reported an increasingly ugly situation, riots in the downtown Tripoli area and the Embassy being stoned. The Royal Libyan Air Force base commander then informed the American command that he could not guarantee the safety of U.S. aircraft and suggested the U.S. stop all flights. The American commander directed an orderly withdrawal of F-4D and F-4C aircraft to home bases, with the F-100s, armed, on temporary hold. Soon mobs began ringing the base.[2]

(U) At the same time an urgent message in the clear came from the Embassy in Benghazi (Libya has two capitals, Tripoli and Benghazi, and there is a U.S. Embassy in each) to the effect that the Embassy

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[1] Amemb Tripoli, to State, 011530Z June 1967, SECRET.
[2] USAFE to USAF CP, 051130Z June 1967, SECRET.

staff plus some dependents were locked in the Embassy vault. A mob had entered the building and the Americans had retreated after throwing tear gas in an effort to hold them off.[1] An hour later the trapped Americans were still safe in the vault, were burning files, and by phone had alerted the American community in the city for possible evacuation.[2]

(S) At this point Rostow at State called the DJS to ask him to start thinking about a rescue scheme if such should be ordered. The DJS called Deputy CINCEUR and discussed the problem with him, suggesting the possible use of paratroops.[3]

(S) Estimates were made at CINCEUR on the time necessary to move Marines to Benghazi and to Wheelus and a force of paratroopers was alerted, one brigade on twenty-four hour alert, one company on six-hour alert. The units were to be prepared for riot control operations.

(U) However, before much further could develop, a message from Benghazi at 1300Z stated that the trapped Americans had been in touch with the British troops (one battalion stationed near Benghazi on a treaty basis) and that the British commander would attempt to rescue the Americans as soon as he received reinforcements.[4] Two hours later the Embassy reported that the mob was now trying to burn the building, but that a force of fifty British soldiers was attempting to reach the Embassy. All communication equipment save the piece used to send this message had been destroyed.[5] At 1805Z the Embassy at Tripoli notified State that a call from Benghazi had reported the arrival of the British troops and that the evacuation was under way. The British were rounding up all the American families, official and unofficial in the area, and taking them into the British barracks.[6]

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[1]Amemb Benghazi, 051107Z June 1967, UNCLASSIFIED.
[2]Amemb Benghazi, 051218Z June 1967, UNCLASSIFIED.
[3]EA tapes, 051304Z June 1967.
[4]Amemb Benghazi to State, 051300Z June 1967, UNCLASSIFIED.
[5]Amemb Benghazi to State, 051530Z June 1967, UNCLASSIFIED.
[6]Amemb Tripoli to State, 051805Z June 1967, UNCLASSIFIED.

(TS) The Benghazi episode thus dramatically closed, but the situation at Wheelus seemed to grow more dangerous. American families from the vicinity were brought onto the base for protection as mob action apparently grew more imminent. At 1800Z CINCEUR directed CINCUSAFE to airlift a 210-man force of air police to Wheelus for reinforcement of internal base security. USAFE and USAREUR were directed to begin planning for the airlift of one airborne battalion from Rhein Main to Camp Darby, Italy, to provide possible reinforcement to Wheelus if such action became necessary. The plan was to provide for one company capable of parachute assault operations in the vicinity of Wheelus.[1]

(C) The air police were moved in, but while ugly incidents continued in Tripoli, they never really spilled onto the base itself. The following morning the Ambassador to Libya requested CINCEUR that a flow of military aircraft be started into Wheelus for a probable evacuation. CINCEUR responded at once and then informed the JCS. The Ambassador withheld his final decision on evacuation while the aircraft were en route.[2] Within a few hours, however, the Ambassador decided to put evacuation on a voluntary basis after polling the American residents. There then ensued an extremely confused period, with State and the JCS unsure of just what the Ambassador wanted, who was running the operation, how the evacuation was to be conducted -- if there was to be one (State preferred that it be by ship rather than military aircraft) -- and how the public affairs aspects should be handled.

(C) The evacuation eventually was carried out as the sense of immediate danger and near panic faded, those who wished to go being moved through Spain and many being landed at the three U.S. Spanish bases. It is interesting to record that the U.S. advised Spain of what it was doing but did not request permission.[3]

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[1]CINCEUR to CINCUSAFE, CINCUSAREUR, 051811Z June 1967, TOP SECRET.
[2]CINCEUR Log, 061500Z June 1967.
[3]CINCEUR Interviews, 5 July 1967.

(U) General evacuation of U.S. nationals began following the State Department warning of 22 May. This was all entirely voluntary, utilizing regular commercial carriers. By 4 June a great portion of the Americans in the critical countries had already departed. The picture on the outbreak of war was as follows:[1]

	Potential Evacuees	Departed 22 May-4 June
Israel	10,900	6,011
UAR	1,115	2,160
Syria	416	511
Jerusalem	1,444	
Jordan	253	1,097
Iraq	936	40
Lebanon	5,613	20

However, the reluctance of Americans to leave raised concern both at STRIKE and CINCEUR over the potential problem if war broke out. On 3 June STRIKE, pointing out that 17,000 Americans were still in the danger area, urged the JCS to suggest stronger measures to encourage early departure and thus reduce the problem that would have to be faced under the panic conditions of an actual war.[2]

(U) With the outbreak of war the evacuation picture became more urgent. On 5 June State directed the establishment of a daily MIDEVAC fact sheet for all Middle East Embassies, giving figures on potential evacuees in each consular district, the number of U.S. Government employees, USG dependents, U.S. citizen residents, U.S. citizen tourists, other potential evacuees. This was to be sent to State by 2200Z daily.[3]

Efforts were mounted immediately to speed up the evacuation of remaining Americans, either by regular commercial flights or by

[1]NMCC Fact Sheet, 051600Z June 1967, UNCLASSIFIED.

[2]CINCSTRIKE to JCS, 031735Z June 1967, SECRET. Simultaneously, an evacuation problem arose in Nigeria, rocked by civil war. By 1 June the U.S. and U.K. were making preparations to get their citizens out of Eastern Nigeria. Although no problems occurred here, the operation continued all through the Middle East crisis.

[3]State to all Arab capitals, 051825Z June 1967, UNCLASSIFIED.

chartered aircraft. Despite the alarms and the concern of ambassadors in the dozen countries involved, only in Libya and Jordan did the issue of military involvement in the evacuation develop. Elsewhere, Embassies or other U.S. facilities were the objects of demonstrations and varying degrees of damage, but not a single American was injured. The American community in Egypt was ordered out of the country by the Egyptian Government and, after much indecision over means to be used, were safely evacuated by sea on 10 June. Dhahran had seemed dangerous for a time and personnel were loaded aboard evacuation aircraft, but by late on the 7th the situation had stabilized and military personnel were returned to their quarters, the evacuation called off.[1] However, dependents were moved out as a safety measure.

OPERATION CREEK DIPPER

(U) With Libya under control, the focus of interest became Jordan. Here, curiously, in the Arab state which the U.S. had befriended most consistently, the Ambassador evinced a growing conviction that the backlash from the sudden one day defeat of Jordanian forces would soon fall on the American community.

(U) The episode which ensued is presented in some detail as a brief case study in evacuation problems. This was the only use of U.S. military forces within the Arab world during the crisis and, while minute in scale, was disproportionately significant politically. Because of the sensitivity of moment, the affair was invested with great interest and some of its details are worth recording.

(S) It was in the opening hour of the 6th that the Ambassador in Amman recommended consideration be given to implementation of Phase One of BRISK POINT.[2] A day later the USDAO in Amman cabled STRIKE directly, requesting planning information on evacuation. Amman requested that the airlift be scheduled to arrive as soon as possible after a cease fire was arranged. If the cease fire were to

[1]CINCEUR to AIG 930, 072400Z June 1967, SECRET.
[2]Amemb Amman to State, 060545Z June 1967, SECRET.

be arranged during that evening, the Embassy requested the feasibility of airlift arrival the following morning.[1]

(S) STRIKE replied a few hours later that at that time it did not appear likely that [ ] would be implemented. Furthermore, it pointed out, evacuation from Jordan was still a State Department responsibility. No information on plans was given.[2]

(S) By this time, however, State was indeed thinking about an evacuation. Two routes were under consideration. Incirlik across Israel to Amman; Incirlik to Teheran to Amman. The first was preferred and State notified the Embassy in Amman that this route was under consideration. The Embassy in Tel Aviv was instructed to inform the Israelis and get clearances.[3] These were received promptly.[4]

(S) Throughout this period a stream of nervous cables came from the Ambassador in Amman. Each message momentarily expected mob attacks to begin in earnest against the American community. State became thoroughly alarmed. Very late on the 7th Kohler of State who was handling the State side of the evacuation, told the Deputy SecDef that the situation had become so grave that the lives of the Americans were in grave jeopardy and the aircraft might have to go into Amman in the morning. Kohler suggested the use of perhaps two companies of MPs to protect the loading area. This action would not, however, extract the Americans from their homes or hotels in downtown Amman; for this, reliance would have to be on the local police.

(S) The Deputy SecDef immediately alerted the CJCS and steps were taken in case an emergency operation might have to be undertaken at once. White House approval was obtained for the dispatch of the

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[1]USDAO Amman to CINCSTRIKE, 071116Z June 1967, SECRET.
[2]CINCSTRIKE to USDAO Amman, 072043Z June 1967, SECRET.
[3]State to Amembs Amman, Tel Aviv, 071624Z June 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.
[4]USDAO Tel Aviv to State, 071950Z June 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.

MPs and a urgent effort set under way to determine the condition of the runways at the Amman airport.[1]

(U) What had caused the sudden emergency was the fact that as yet a cease fire had not yet been signed. Some Jordanian units, having lost communications with their headquarters, were continuing to resist the Israelis, unaware that the Jordanian Government was desperately seeking to end the fighting. In turn the Israelis continued to smash at Jordan, and the attitude of the populace toward Americans and Britons was becoming uglier by the hour.

(U) However, the furor had barely begun when a cease fire was effected between Israel and Jordan. This, in the view of the senior military people, took some of the urgency out of the situation and permitted more time for planning and a less hazardous operation.

(S) In the closing hour of the 7th, the JCS had directed CINCEUR to be prepared to evacuate approximately 400 people from Amman. CINCEUR was told to move not more than one Air Police or Military Police company to Athens without delay and to hold them there. He was similarly to deploy airlift to forward bases at his discretion, Athens or Incirlik being available, and with appropriate clearance, four C-130s were to be moved to Teheran to provide alternate routing. Since the evacuation route, as yet unselected, might involve overflight of Israel, CINCEUR was to continue coordination with the USDAO Tel Aviv in regard to clearances, flight plan, escort, and landing arrangements.[2]

(C) However, the Ambassador in Amman opposed the use of Israeli airspace for evacuation, and this route was accordingly dropped.

(S) By this time, however, EUCOM was already prepared and standing by for JCS release. Nine C-130s were in Athens and Incirlik

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[1] EA tapes, 8 June 1967.

[2] JCS 7352 to CINCEUR, 080407Z June 1967, SECRET.

available for immediate use.[1] CINCEUR's orders to USAFE and USAREUR directed that the MP company be under way from Rhein Main by 0930Z, 8 June, and that the company was to be ready to undertake local security of the aircraft and the loading area in Jordan. On arrival in Greece, the MPs were to come under the operational control of the Mission Commander, Jordan Evacuation Group. (The Jordan Evacuation Group was formed by and under the control of USAFE, overall direction emanating from CINCEUR.) The Mission Commander was to be prepared to execute the evacuation order as early as 0500Z, 9 June.[2]

(S) CINCEUR directly notified the Embassies in Jiddah, Teheran, and Baghdad that his mission would require overflight of Iran, Iraq. or Saudi Arabia. Diplomatic clearances had already been requested to position four aircraft in Teheran. The preferred routing from Teheran to Amman would require overflight of Saudi Arabia. An alternate route from Teheran involved overflight of Iraq. CINCEUR requested any comments the Embassies might have regarding the problems anticipated for overflights, for planning purposes, prior to the formal request for clearance.[3]

(S) CINCEUR requested and received from CINCSTRIKE at this time operational control of the Jackpot aircraft which was waiting at Lages. It was to move to Athens for the use of the Mission Commander.[4]

(S) Late on the 8th CINCEUR directed CINCUSAFE to position the thirteen alerted aircraft in Teheran as soon as feasible, since the evacuation was now planned for the first plane to arrive in Amman at 0500Z on the 10th. The aircraft were to hold in Teheran pending overflight clearances and JCS release. The STRIKE Jackpot aircraft was to go to Teheran as well.[5]

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[1]CINCEUR to AIG 930, 072400Z June 1967, SECRET.
[2]CINCEUR to USAFE, USAREUR, 080728Z June 1967, SECRET.
[3]CINCEUR to Amembs Jiddah, Teheran, Baghdad, 081020Z June 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.
[4]CINCEUR to CINCSTRIKE, 081416Z June 1967, SECRET.
[5]CINCEUR to CINCUSAFE, 090340Z June 1967, SECRET.

(U) At midnight on the 8th State informed the Embassies at Amman, Moscow, Cairo, Teheran and Jiddah that the decision had been taken to evacuate approximately 1,000 people from Amman by USAF aircraft, the lift to commence at 0500Z, 10 June. Hopefully the entire operation would be done in a day. No publicity was to be given the operation. Amman was directed to evacuate the American community first and others as expeditiously as possible. The Embassy was to invite the Soviet mission in Amman to participate in an international evacuation to Teheran. It was also anticipated that the British would be evacuating approximately 400 people that same day to Bahrein; coordination of the flights should be arranged. The Embassies in Cairo and Moscow were to notify their respective host governments on a private basis that we were undertaking this operation.[1]

(S) By this time the operation had become quite complicated by the involvement of so many contact points. The USDAO in Jiddah expressed his opinion on this matter while informing State that all fourteen aircraft had been cleared for overflight if necessary. He complained that considerable confusion had been engendered by ten messages from four agencies in the last thirty-four hours on the subject of the same clearances. The Saudis, he went on, were difficult to deal with under normal circumstances on unusual clearances. The difficulties in this case had been compounded by a Moslem holy day, changes in overflight and/or landing requests, and errors in the number of aircraft involved.[2]

(S) The USDAO Jiddah's problem was minor compared to the welter of confusion which now arose in the evacuation. At 1200Z on the 9th, with only half a day to go, the Embassy in Amman cabled the USAFE command post to the effect that the Ambassador desired that aircraft arrive bearing U.N. markings, the USAF markings painted out. This was of utmost importance to the safety of the operation.[3] The Embassy

[1]Joint State/Defense message, to Amembs Amman, Moscow, Cairo, Teheran, Jiddah, 090435Z June 1967, UNCLASSIFIED.

[2]USDAO Jiddah to State, 090530Z June 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.

[3]Amemb Amman to State, 091715Z June 1967, SECRET.

similarly informed State a few hours later that there should be no conspicuous U.S. markings. All personnel should wear U.N. armbands (blue with white letters), and with any weapons kept out of sight. The Ambassador asked confirmation that his advice would be "scrupulously adhered to."[1]

(S) The USDAO simultaneously informed the USAFE CP to delay Creek Dipper until 0400Z on the 11th. USAFE was advised to use the extra twenty-three hours to implement the Ambassador's requirements and advice regarding markings. The planes should have "enormously conspicuous" U.N. markings on them. The crews should wear civilian clothing, even if it had to be borrowed.[2]

(S) The Ambassador's brainchild received a jolt at this point when the USDAO in Ankara informed his counterpart in Amman that if U.N. markings were used on U.S. aircraft going into Amman, those markings would have to be removed prior to entering Turkish air space unless approval were obtained from the U.N.[3]

(S) At this point a cryptic message from CINCEUR to the JCS recited the list of above messages and the conflicting recommendations contained therein and asked JCS guidance.[4] The JCS merely replied with an order to delay the evacuation until 0400Z the next day as the Embassy requested.[4]

(S) The Ambassador now changed his requirements, suggesting to State that if the U.N. markings were not feasible, large red crosses should be used and the USAF markings painted out. The crews should be in civilian clothes with red cross armbands.[5]

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[1]USDAO Amman to USAFE CP, 091710Z June 1967, SECRET.
[2]USDAO Ankara to USDAO Amman, 091530Z June 1967, SECRET.
[3]CINCEUR to JCS, 092024Z June 1967, SECRET.
[4]JCS 7538 to CINCEUR, 092048Z June 1967, SECRET.
[5]Amemb Amman to State, 100020Z June 1967, SECRET.

(S) Three hours later CINCEUR informed USAFE that the JCS had directed that large red crosses be painted on the aircraft, but that it was not necessary to paint out the USAF markings. Red cross armbands and civilian clothing were to be worn by all and no arms displayed. The commander of Creek Dipper was to work with the Ambassador to see that the crews had civilian clothing. If required, it was requested that the Embassy furnish it.[1]

(U) It is worthy of note that the Creek Dipper commander was the same officer who, as Chief of the Joint Task Force, Leopoldville, in the Congo in late 1964, had helped organize the Congo rescue mission in November of that year.

(S) There followed another change. USAFE requested the USDAO in Teheran to inform the Creek Dipper commander that CINCEUR approval had been received for the aircrews to wear white coveralls, similar to civilian airlines, and red cross armbands.[2]

(S) This rather ludicrous episode had no sooner been resolved than a new complication arose. The Embassy in London alerted State that the British were going to suggest that the two airlifts be not merely coordinated but merged.[3] Shortly thereafter, USAFE was called direct by the RAF at the Ministry of Defense in London, suggesting a combined evacuation. CINCEUR, however, expressed a preference for going on as previously planned. Creek Dipper was poised and ready to launch in a few hours and a change could cause serious complications. Furthermore, the British airlift would be coming in from a different direction, from Cyprus over Israel, which might create difficulties. If it were politically unavoidable for the British to participate, CINCEUR preferred that they be assigned the task of picking up the last four loads. At this late date, CINCEUR wanted to leave the operation as clean as possible.[4]

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[1]CINCEUR to USAFE, 100330Z June 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.
[2]USAFE to USDAO Teheran, 100902Z June 1967, CONFIDENTIAL.
[3]Amemb London to State, 101210Z June 1967, UNCLASSIFIED.
[4]EA tapes, 10 June 1967. Also interview at EUCOM, 5 July 1967.

(U) Finally, at noon on the 10th the JCS directed CINCEUR to commence the operation upon his receipt of clearances from Jordan.[1]

(U) The first aircraft was to land by 0300Z, at which time the task force commander would evaluate the situation on the ground before deciding on the safety of authorizing the landing of succeeding aircraft. No aircraft were to land at Saudi bases except in emergencies.[2]

(U) The evacuation was launched on schedule and was executed without a hitch in extremely fast time. Aircraft were on the ground on an average of eighteen minutes (the shortest time was twelve minutes), engines being kept turning. So rapidly were the planes loaded and taken off that a couple of Jordanian baggage handlers were carried off to Teheran.[3]

(U) The operation was reported completed ahead of schedule at 0800Z.[4]

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[1]JCS 7633 to CINCEUR, 101635Z June 1967, SECRET.
[2]CINCEUR to USAFE, 101800Z June 1967, SECRET.
[3]EUCOM, interviews, 5 July 1967.
[4]CINCEUR to JCS, 110857Z June 1967, UNCLASSIFIED.

IX. THE END OF THE CRISIS

(U) By Thursday, 8 June, the air and ground forces of Egypt and Jordan had been destroyed. Israeli forces were on the east bank of the Canal; they had freed the Gulf of Aqaba by seizing Sharm-el-Sheil they had swept over most of the Sinai; they had seized the west bank region of Jordan and the Jordanian sector of Jerusalem.

(U) Furious activity within the U.N. produced on Tuesday and Wednesday calls for a cease fire. Israel refused to accept until its opponents did so, but with Egypt's acceptance on the 8th, Jordan having yielded earlier, Israel also accepted. Fighting died down gradually on the UAR-Israel front thereafter. However, despite Syrian and Israeli acceptance of the cease fire on the Syrian front late on the 8th, the cease fire broke down the following day and Israeli forces swung their main weight against the sole remaining enemy with the power to resist. Israeli forces broke through the Syrian defense lines and by Saturday morning, 10 June, seemed to be i a position to drive on Damascus.

(U) This was to be the last day of the war and the one which was to raise great though short lived alarm in U.S. command circles, since it was on this day that the U.S. and Soviet paths suddenly threatened to turn into a collision course.

(U) The Security Council had been called into session at 0930Z on the 10th by Syria to deal with the continuing fighting in violation of the Council's cease fire orders. At 0908Z the American consul in Jerusalem reported to State that the U.N. truce team had informed him of the fall of the key Syrian position at Quneitra, and that Damascus was under air attack and in danger of falling to the Israeli advance.[1]

[1] Am Consul Jerusalem to State, 100908Z June 1967, UNCLASSIFIED.

While the Israelis denied bombing Damascus, the report spread widely.

(U) In the Security Council the Soviet representative, hammering hard on the Israelis, announced that the Soviet government was breaking diplomatic relations with Israel.

A. THE EPISODE OF 10 JUNE

(TS) Early on the 10th indications reached Washington that if the Israelis' advance against the Syrians were not soon stopped, the Soviets might intervene militarily in support of the Syrians.

(TS) [

] Just what action we took and what pressure was brought to bear on the Israelis is not known. From later actions, however, it may be inferred that some personal step was taken by the President. It would also appear that the Israelis were responsive to such action.

(TS) This information set in train a concentrated period of military activity. There was a high level conference at the White House immediately following receipt of the information. The CJCS emerged at 1354Z and directed the J-3 to send a message off immediately which would move the Sixth Fleet toward the East, with a definite limit set to its eastward movement. The Fleet was to be moved within range to cover Israel and the Sinai area. The Amphibious Force was to start sailing east toward Crete. In order to let CINCEUR, the Sixth Fleet, and NAVEUR know what had happened, the Chairman suggested a lead-in paragraph

to the effect that the continued lack of an Israeli-Syrian response had led to fears that the Soviets might use military force against the Israelis. The Chairman emphasized that the message should make clear that these were precautionary moves. Lastly, the information was not to be passed to the correspondents on board the Sixth Fleet carriers.[1]

(TS) The DJS alerted Deputy CINCEUR personally via secure phone at 1406Z as to developments and suggested that the latter (who was on the point of departure) remain at Stuttgart because the new situation might last from several to twenty-four hours.[2] The latter immediately took steps to reverse an earlier NAVEUR instruction of 1115Z that morning to the Sixth Fleet, directing TG 60.1 to operate in the vicinity of 20°E longitude, and to send TG 60.2 into Soudha Bay for an upkeep period.[3] EUCOM informed NAVEUR of the DJS's instructions. The SARATOGA was not to be moved to Soudha Bay, the AMERICA was not to be moved to the west but was to be kept on station to counter possible Soviet actions. CINCEUR asked how long the SARATOGA could remain at sea without serious degradation.[4]

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[1]EA tapes, 10 June 1967.
[2]EUCOM Log, 101440Z June 1967, SECRET.
[3]NAVEUR to Com Sixth Fleet, 101115Z June 1967, SECRET.
[4]CINCEUR to NAVEUR, 101422Z June 1967, TOP SECRET.

(TS) The Sixth Fleet informed NAVEUR in reply that instructions for ship deployments were being carried out, the SARATOGA proceeding eastward to join the Task Force, and the AMERICA moving eastward at sixteen knots. As to the query on the SARATOGA, she could remain at sea as long as required.[1]

(S) The JCS instruction to CINCEUR, as set forth by the CJCS to the J-3, was dispatched at 1522Z. The two task forces were to steam at moderate speed toward 33°00'N - 33°00'W. Fleet elements were not to operate east of 33°00'E or south of 33°00'N unless directed by the JCS. These were precautionary moves only, but necessary preparatory measures should be taken.[2]

(S) CINCEUR in turn directed NAVEUR at 1840Z to take the actions directed by the JCS.[3] The Commander, Sixth Fleet sent instructions to his three Task Forces at 1953Z, directing the Task Forces to operate within a thirty-mile radius of designated points. No units were to approach closer than 100 miles to the coasts of Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Israel or closer than twenty-five miles to Cyprus.[4]

(S) In the meantime, in Washington other actions were hastily taken to prepare for any eventuality. While it seemed to the senior commanders most unlikely that any really grave trouble would arise with the Soviets at this point when the end of the Middle East war was almost achieved, the development did change the whole context drastically. No more were we concerned over possible engagement with the UAR. Now there appeared the possibility, no matter how remote, of serious confrontation with the Soviets. Ironically, the Middle East crisis, in its very last moment, was threatening to cause the U.S.-Soviet confrontation which both sides had been so careful to avoid in the previous four weeks.

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[1]Com Sixth Fleet to NAVEUR, 101545Z June 1967, TOP SECRET.
[2]JCS 7628 to CINCEUR, 101522Z June 1967, SECRET.
[3]CINCEUR to NAVEUR, 101840Z June 1967, SECRET.
[4]Com Sixth Fleet to CTG 60, 61, 62, 101953Z June 1967, SECRET.

(TS) The Watch Committee was called into session at 1455Z in order to discuss any indications of Soviet military activity. The DJS called CINCSAC at 1413Z and asked about the implementation of the airborne alert.[1] The Chief of the Strategic Operations Division, J-3, was called to the Chairman's office and told to send an order to SAC to begin the airborne alert and to start generating. The message was prepared and taken to the J-3, but was overtaken by events and never sent to SAC.[2]

(S) NAVEUR was called on VOCOM and told that the highest authority "wanted the precise location of every Soviet ship in the Mediterranean."[3]

(TS) The Chairman also directed the Vice J-3 to prepare a series of U.S. responses to possible Soviet action. Apparently such a study had not been undertaken in the previous three weeks. Consequently, a four-man team was hastily drawn together from J-3, including officers who had not until this moment been involved in Middle East affairs. A series of four Soviet courses of action was given and for each a U.S. response was worked out, specifying the actions to be taken by each unified commander involved. Included was a series of military-political options to prevent a U.S.-USSR confrontation.

(S) The entire task took only two hours and the results, including spread sheets, were prepared as a fact book for the Chairman.[4]

(TS) The Soviet courses of action considered were airborne operations into Syria and the UAR; bomber attacks on Israel, with or without fighter escort; naval attacks on Israel, a combination of the previous three courses of action.

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[1] EA tapes, 10 June 1967.

[2] Interview, J-3, 10 September 1967.

[3] NAVEUR, Interview, July 1967.

[4] Interview, J-3, 10 September 1967; Memorandum for the Director of Operations from Chief EUR/ME Division, J-3, 22 June 1967, TOP SECRET.

(b)(1)
(a)(1)

(S) The political-military steps suggested to avoid a U.S.-Soviet confrontation are interesting: (1) the President should advise Prime Minister Eshkol that hostilities must cease immediately, pointing out the implications of continued Israeli action. At the same time, the Israelis could be reassured of U.S. support to bring about an equitable settlement in the Middle East; (2) in the event Israeli cooperation were not obtained, the U.S. should notify Israel that all U.S. arms contracts were cancelled; (3) propose that a U.N. force be offered to Syria to assist in stopping hostilities. Offer U.S. logistics support, including aircraft, to expedite the arrival of any U.N. force. Avoid U.S. or Soviet active participation as members of the U.N. force; (4) in order to gain time, persuade Turkey to require the full eight days prior notice for the transit of Soviet ships through the Dardenelles into the Mediterranean; (5) request Turkey and Iran to refuse overflight rights to Soviet military aircraft en route to the Arab countries; (6) suggest to the Soviets that U.S. and Soviet political representatives meet to agree on actions that might be taken bilaterally to bring about a cessation of hostilities; (7) in the event that the situation deteriorated to the point where the Soviets had introduced military units into Syria against Israel, the U.S. could provide logistics support to Israel, to include if necessary, aircraft and weapons; (8) if all the above actions were not successful, the U.S. could intervene militarily in Israel against the Soviet/Arab combination.[1]

(S) These then were the J-5 developed suggestions so hastily developed and approved for delivery to the CJCS. While the realism of some may be questioned, they are of interest as representing the line of thought offered to the military command authorities.

[1]Fact Book for the CJCS, 10 June 1967, TOP SECRET.

(S) At 1528Z the CJCS arranged a conference call with all the Joint Chiefs in order to bring them up to date on what had occurred. The use of the conference call was an unusual step. He related the course of the activity, stressing that things did seem to have calmed down somewhat on the battlefront. The Israelis were denying they were threatening Damascus and Prime Minister Eshkol reportedly had personally gone to the Syrian front in order to ensure that the cease fire was being kept. The Israeli military objective had been strictly limited to the elimination of the well dug in artillery which had for so long harrassed the Israeli border settlements.

(TS) The Chairman also described the sorts of actions the Soviets might take if they actually decided to intervene. He informed the Chiefs of what he termed the "rather low key preparatory moves" on the part of US forces, pointing out that we had gone into an intensive effort to identify any Soviet military preparations or moves. In regard to the airborne alert, the CJCS did not think implementation would be wise. Generally, he felt, the best policy was to sit tight. He hoped the situation would straighten itself out in a few hours because it was "beginning to become rather sticky." The consensus of the Chiefs was that this was our best policy for the moment.[1]

(S) The DJS called Deputy CINCEUR at 2053Z to inform him that the situation had not changed much, although it seemed to be easing somewhat. He similarly informed CINCSAC a few minutes later to stand easy and not to undertake any alerting or other overt preparatory moves.

(U) In the meantime the Security Council had called for a cease fire to go into effect by 1230Z, but nothing had happened. The Syrians then proposed 1630Z and the Israelis agreed.[2] While firing continued until sundown, the Israelis announced that all advances had ceased and that their forces would henceforth strictly observe the cease fire.

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[1]EA tapes, 10 June 1967.

[2]Amemb Tel Aviv to State, 101632Z June 1967, UNCLASSIFIED.

B. EPILOGUE

(TS) With this development the sudden crisis passed, although rumblings continued on for another two days as rumors of Soviet or Soviet/East Bloc military threats continued. These were viewed by Intelligence, however, either as deliberate Arab (or Soviet) plants or as the result of time garbles. As of the 12th there were still no indications from the Trans Caucasian area of Soviet troop movements toward the crisis zone. In the immediate aftermath of the war the Soviets undertook large scale delivery of weapons to the Arabs and reaffirmed their full backing of the Arab position, but there was no renewal of the crisis.

(U) Within the broader context, the whole Middle East crisis can be said to have ended on the 10th. The Israelis had apparently reached the limit of their objectives and were quite ready to heed the U.N. call and U.S. pressure to call a halt. The Arabs were in a position of no choice but to accept the cease fire; the U.S. was relieved to have escaped involvement; the Soviet attitude has never been determined. After the 10th of June the crisis became again a revised version of the twenty year old problem.

X. SOME SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS

(U) The nature of this report, a brief summary account of an extended and extremely complicated crisis, does not really lend itself to the drawing of general conclusions. However, several broad points can be stressed.

1. (S) The U.S. did get through the crisis without making any major mistakes, although we can hardly claim that our policies were successful. In part this was due to the nature of the crisis. The U.S. was not directly involved, the most critical factor of all. Although we had many interests at stake -- U.S. influence in the Middle East (always an ephemeral and clearly in large part an illusory thing); oil; the existence of Israel; the principle of freedom of the seas; the most direct and immediate interest -- the safety of the 30,000-odd Americans in the danger areas. At the same time we were also in a sense prisoners of multiple and contradictory commitments, although those commitments were admittedly vague.

(S) However, that we did not make any major mistakes was probably due in good part to the fact that the Israelis ended the crisis when they did. Had the crisis dragged on indecisively, the U.S. might have become more directly involved.

2. (S) U.S. policy as it developed can be questioned on two major grounds. Initially we were concerned on the one hand with the prevention of war, and on the second, with the maintenance of Israeli and international rights. The critical dilemma in the firm policy, however, was to determine how far down the road to a military clash with the UAR we wished to go in order to prevent the Israelis from doing so. This dilemma was never fully faced, although the U.S. military made their opinions perfectly clear.

(S) While we wrestled with this dilemma and considered the preparations that would be necessary, we convinced ourselves that the crisis could be held in a state of suspended animation. This depended upon the Israelis' remaining convinced that we really meant what we said.

(S) However, the initial firm stand which we affected gradually became increasingly based upon the degree and extent of international support for that policy. Our inability to muster international support and our obvious backing off made it increasingly apparent to the Israelis that their fate rested in their own hands and that they no longer had any other choices except war or acceptance of the Egyptian coup.

3. (S) Our estimate of the Soviet role in the Middle East crisis always seemed to be touched with optimism about Soviet willingness or even eagerness to join with us to prevent war. The unyielding posture assumed by the Soviets during the prewar crisis, a posture composed not merely of words but of concrete acts like naval deployments and continued military aid to the Arabs, gave little grounds for such an optimism.

4. (S) U.S. policy towards the Arabs was based upon the assumption that the Arabs would remain divided among themselves. The swift unity displayed by the Arabs, grudging though it may have been and skin deep though it apparently was in some cases, took us by surprise. The positions of strength and influence which we thought we had been building for the previous decade suddenly fell to the ground, along with the other two pillars of our Middle East policy, the expectations of Nasser's restraint and of Soviet willingness to cooperate in the maintenance of peace.

5. (U) In terms of organization to meet and handle the crisis, the senior policy makers once again displayed their predisposition toward the bypassing of established formal mechanisms and the creating of new ad hoc mechanisms. This is now so customary a pattern in crises that it can almost be considered standard, and the operational level must

be prepared to accomodate to it, despite the problems associated with the habit. Invariably, new organizations, new procedures, and new people will have to be fitted into a functioning pattern under the pressure of time and stress. In this case, the burgeoning of the ad hoc crisis mechanism caused difficulties, difficulties which could have become serious if the crisis had drawn the U.S. into a more direct involvement. However, it should be recalled that we did enjoy the luxury of time, three weeks in which to get the new mechanism functioning, and previous crises have shown that it takes only a fairly short time before new mechanisms and procedures become routine.

6. (S) The endless concern evidenced in military contingency planning over the issue of overflight/base rights reflected the dominant constraint on U.S. military operations in the Eastern Mediterranean-Middle East region. Such rights were found to be questionable even in the case of friendly and allied countries of Europe, to say nothing of other states in the area. The ambiguity of the problem poses serious difficulties for meaningful contingency planning. While closer continuing coordination between CINCSTRIKE and CINCEUR and the respective area Embassies would probably improve general awareness of the interrelationships of the military and political problems involved in the overflight issue, there does not appear to be any feasible alternative to simply awaiting a crisis and then requesting such rights.

7. (S) The episode of the USS LIBERTY would seem to indicate the need to maintain a closer watch on intelligence gathering activities, especially when they are under divided command, in a sensitive area to insure that they are in line with the overall thrust of U.S. policy. The parallel between the U-2 incident and the LIBERTY affair is all too evident.

8. (U) The difficulties that arose over evacuation in several places point up the need for more thorough preparation by and greater coordination between State and Defense in this matter. Measures to improve respective understanding of the political and the military dimensions

of evacuations, greater attention in planning to the operational details which cause trouble, and clearer procedures would seem to be called for.

CHRONOLOGY (S)

13 November 1966 - Israeli attack on Samu, Jordan.

7-14 May 1967 - Reports circulating in Tel Aviv of pending Israeli action against Syria.

13 May 1967 - UAR receives intelligence reports, apparently from Soviets, warning of Israeli attack on Syria.

14 May 1967 - Chief of Staff of UAR armed forces flies to Damascus.

15 May 1967 - UAR forces go on alert. Deployments begin.
Israelis relaxed.

16 May 1967 - Israelis begin to show concern over UAR deployments toward Sinai. Propaganda campaign begins in UAR and spreads all over Arab world.

17 May 1967 - UAR Military Command in Sinai requests UNEF withdrawn from border.
Reports of UAR troops being withdrawn from Yemen to Sinai.
Israel begins mobilization.

18 May 1967 - UAR requests termination of UNEF and withdrawal from UAR territory.

19 May 1967 - UNEF patrols cease and UNEF withdraws to Gaza Strip.

20 May 1967 - UAR declares state of emergency in Gaza Strip.
UAR and eleven other Arab states declare united front -- Iraq and Syria call for destruction of Israel.
Sixth Fleet carrier task groups directed to move eastward to area of Crete. Normal operations to be maintained.

21 May 1967 - UAR calls for mobilization of reserves.

22 May 1967 - UAR announces blockade of Gulf of Aqaba. UAR forces seize Sharm-el-Sheikh.

1 June 1967 - Dayan named Israeli Defense Minister.

2 June 1967 - JCS permits Sixth Fleet to commence in-port upkeep periods, reflecting relaxation of tension.

3 June 1967 - Iraq joins UAR-Jordan defense pact.

4 June 1967 - UAR and Iraqi forces enter Jordan.

5 June 1967 - Israelis launch preemptive strike.

MOLINK exchanges with Soviet leaders begin.

UAR and Jordan concoct and disseminate false intervention charge.

Crisis in Benghazi. British troops rescue trapped Americans.

Crisis at Wheelus AB.

6 June 1967 - Initial U.S. military moves negative, to avoid giving impression of U.S. intervention. JCS disapproves movement of Amphibious Force from Malta. Algeria, UAR, Syria, Sudan, and Yemen break relations with the U.S.

Algeria and Kuwait ban all shipments to the U.S. and the U.K.

8 June 1967 - USS LIBERTY mistakenly attacked by Israelis.

Cease fire accepted by Israel, UAR, and Jordan.

Fighting continues on Syrian front.

9 June 1967 - Israelis launch offensive against Syria.

10 June 1967 - U.N. Security Council called into session by Syria to deal with continued fighting. Damascus reported in danger from Israeli advance. Soviets break relations with Israelis and threaten them. Soviet threats to intervene cause flurry of planning activity in Washington and deployments ordered to meet possible situations. Israel and Syria both accept cease fire and fighting dies down.

11 June 1967 - Operation Creek Dipper (Evacuation of Jordan) executed.