



(c) crown copyright

SECRET

C. (53) 318

COPY NO. 70

13th NOVEMBER, 1953.

CABINET

MILITARY AID TO JORDAN IN THE EVENT  
OF ATTACK BY ISRAEL

Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The increase of tension between Israel and Jordan since the Qibya incident has brought to the forefront the questions of (i) our obligation to go to war to assist Jordan if she is attacked by Israel, and (ii) what, if any, military measures we should take as a deterrent to Israel, either forthwith or in the event of a further incident which, though serious, did not lead to war.

United Kingdom obligation towards Jordan

2. The text of Articles 2 to 4 of the Anglo-Jordan Treaty of Alliance of 1948 is annexed. Under Article 3 we are obliged to go to Jordan's aid if she becomes engaged in war, provided that she has duly concerted with us to try and settle the dispute by peaceful means, and subject always to the obligations of both parties under the United Nations Charter and other international agreements. Since Article 51 of the United Nations Charter safeguards the right of collective self-defence pending action by the Security Council, it would seem that the only United Nations action which could relieve us of our obligation to assist Jordan if she were attacked would be a decision by the Security Council under Chapter VII (the "sanctions" chapter) of the Charter, on which the United Kingdom would, of course, have a veto.

3. A further complication is that Jordan is obliged under the Arab League Treaty of Joint Defence (1950) to go to the aid of any other party to the Treaty which may be attacked. It is thus possible, e.g. that Jordan might call upon the United Kingdom for assistance under the Anglo-Jordan Treaty as a result of defending Syria against aggression by Israel. Our obligations in such a case would depend very much on the precise circumstances.

4. Our obligation to assist Jordan in the event of attack might not arise if we could argue that the Jordan Government had not carried out its obligation to seek a peaceful settlement (Article 2 of the Anglo-Jordan Treaty), or to concert measures of defence with us under the second part of Article 3. It is, however, clear that, whatever the precise legal position, a failure on our part to defend Jordan against at any rate a direct attack by Israel would provoke intense bitterness in the Arab world and destroy the value of our Treaty connections, especially with Jordan and Iraq. The Jordan Government were re-assured about six weeks ago of our intention to defend Jordan in case of war; with the rider that border incidents or limited reprisal raids would not, in our view, constitute a casus foederis.

Question of stationing British forces in Jordan.

5. The Chiefs of Staff, I understand, take the view that in present circumstances Israel could probably overrun Jordan before she could be

effectively assisted by United Kingdom forces. It is, therefore, for consideration whether we should seek to deter Israel and stabilise the situation by sending limited British forces into Jordan in peace-time as an earnest of our intention to implement the Treaty. The Cabinet agreed in principle on 29th October (C.C.(53) 62nd Conclusions, Minute 5) that we should accept the invitation of the Jordan Prime Minister to despatch an armoured squadron to Maan in Eastern Jordan, ostensibly for training with the Arab Legion. I have, however, suspended formal confirmation of our agreement pending the outcome of the Security Council debate on Qibya. In addition to the armoured squadron, the forces which we should be able, if the Jordan Government agreed, to despatch to Jordan might consist of a battalion and four R.A.F. squadrons.

6. The arguments for such a despatch of token forces to Jordan are:-

- (i) they would diminish the likelihood of our being called upon to carry out our engagement to assist Jordan in war, since the Israelis would be more hesitant about committing an act of aggression against Jordan;
- (ii) if we nevertheless had to fulfil this engagement they would help us to do so more effectively;
- (iii) apart from the Israel-Jordan question, it is in our general strategic interest to station troops in Jordan as an alternative to the Canal Zone. The despatch even of token forces would enable us to get a foot in the door.

7. The arguments against are:-

- (i) The despatch of British forces to Jordan would be regarded in pro-Israel circles as an unjustified intervention in the Israel-Jordan dispute. The weight of this argument may be affected by the outcome of the current debate in the Security Council;
- (ii) if British forces are stationed in Jordan there will be strong pressure on us to use them against the Israelis, certainly in case of war, and perhaps even in the event of a further serious border incident. Consequently, our freedom of political manoeuvre as between Israel and the Arabs might be circumscribed.

#### Recommendation

8. I consider that the move of an armoured squadron to Jordan, authorised by the Cabinet on 29th October, should not take place pending the discussion of the Qibya incident in the Security Council. Subject to the outcome of this discussion, however, we should, at the same time as we proceed with the move of the armoured squadron to Maan, suggest to the Jordan Government that this should be supplemented by an additional battalion and four R.A.F. squadrons as soon as possible.

A.E.

Foreign Office, S.W.1.

13th November, 1953.



ANNEX

EXTRACTS FROM THE TREATY OF ALLIANCE BETWEEN HIS MAJESTY IN RESPECT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND AND HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF THE HASHIMITE KINGDOM OF TRANSJORDAN.

---

AMMAN, 15th MARCH, 1948.

ARTICLE 2

Should any dispute between either High Contracting Party and a third State produce a situation which would involve the risk of a rupture with that State, the High Contracting Parties will concert together with a view to the settlement of the said dispute by peaceful means in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and of any other international obligations which may be applicable to the case.

ARTICLE 3

Should either High Contracting Party notwithstanding the provisions of Article 2 become engaged in war, the other High Contracting Party will, subject always to the provisions of Article 4, immediately come to his aid as a measure of collective defence.

In the event of an imminent menace of hostilities the High Contracting Parties will immediately concert together the necessary measures of defence.

ARTICLE 4

Nothing in the present Treaty is intended to, or shall in any way prejudice the rights and obligations which devolve, or may devolve, upon either of the High Contracting Parties under the Charter of the United Nations or under any other existing international agreements, conventions or treaties.

---