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Memo on the Middle Eastern Situation

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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MEMO ON THE MIDDLE EASTERN SITUATION

The United States and the majority of the United Nations members were responsible for persuading Israel to withdraw its troops from Gaza and the Gulf of Aqaba areas. We have an equal responsibility in seeing to it that the Egyptians do not force a showdown through the imposition of a governor of the Strip -- which is understandable and perhaps a propaganda move -- and a return of Egyptian armed forces and civil administration -- which is not understandable because it spells trouble with a big T. The assurances given in the United Nations preceding the withdrawal of Israel were that the United Nations would undertake the administration of the Strip. This was the assumption made by Mrs. Meier, the foreign minister of Israel, and supported by Ambassador Lodge on behalf of the United States. Unfortunately, the United Nations Emergency Force is in Gaza and along the Gulf of Aqaba by leave of Egypt. While, under the 1949 Armistice, Egypt is allowed to occupy Gaza, it must be remembered that Gaza is not Egyptian and that its final and ultimate title has not yet been settled. If the Egyptians send troops back into Gaza, there is no question but that there will be trouble and that in all likelihood the war between Israel and its neighbors will once again be resumed.

The United States, by preventing Israel, Britain and France from finishing the job in the Aqaba Gulf and Gaza areas which they could have done but for our objections, makes it mandatory on the United States to finish the undertaking they started only to be halted by our intervention. What can be done?

1. Gaza must remain under the auspices of the United Nations and the UNEF.
2. The United Nations must have the exclusive right to administer the Gaza Strip.
3. The United States must warn Egypt that if hostile or provocative moves are undertaken, she will be held responsible.
4. If Egypt sends troops into the area, a real threat to the peace ⁱⁿ that part of the world would arise, and we should demand an emergency session of the United Nations General Assembly.
5. The United States should take the lead in the creation of a permanent United Nations police force to replace the UNEF.
6. We should give all material and moral support possible to Israel in the event of hostilities provoked by Egypt.
7. We and our allies should immediately begin to boycott the use of the Suez Canal, and that boycott should extend not only to vessels flying the American flag but to vessels owned by Americans flying the Liberian, Honduran, Panamanian and other flags.

8. We should give all possible support to making sure that "innocent passage" is maintained through the Strait of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba.

9. We should encourage the building in Israel of 16" and 36" pipelines for the transportation of oil from the Port of Elath to points on the Israeli Mediterranean coast. These to be in addition to the 8" pipeline now in the process of being built from Elath and completed almost to Beersheba.

10. We should apply to Egypt the same strong hand we applied to Israel.

The United Nations must have exclusive right to administer the Gaza Strip until some degree of stability is achieved in the area. The United Nations' purpose is to preserve the peace. Nasser's message has been delivered; it must be met firmly and quickly to the end that Nasser will realize that he will not again be allowed to achieve a victory which he did not deserve and then only through outside interposition and certainly not on the basis of his or the Egyptian Army's record. This time the shoe is on the other foot.