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Middle East Situation

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001
On Wednesday, April 17, at a White House press conference President Eisenhower declared that there were two ways in which the United States could act to assist a victim of Middle Eastern aggression. One was the Tri-partite Agreement of May 25, 1950, which was a declaration that France, Britain and the United States would act together to assist the victim of aggression in a dispute between the Arab states and Israel. It has been my understanding that while this country has consistently maintained that the Tri-Partite Agreement of 1950 was still in operation, that, as a result of our actions in getting the British and French out of the Suez area last fall, on their part they considered the Tri-Partite Agreement a dead letter.

The second way the United States, according to President Eisenhower, could assist a victim of Middle East aggression would be in the event of a communist strike against a Middle Eastern country if that Middle Eastern country requested this country for assistance. This, the President indicated, would bring into consideration the recently approved Eisenhower resolution. This resolution does not authorize the President, but at his discretion, in his Constitutional capacity as commander-in-chief of the armed forces, if he so determines the necessity thereof, makes clear that the United States is prepared to use American armed forces if help is requested by Middle Eastern nations against communist attacks.
Hussein in a broadcast on April 24 placed the blame for the difficulties in Jordan on "international communism". This is the first indication that a real possibility exists for the use of the so-called Eisenhower Doctrine. The Eisenhower resolution states in effect that the United States will unilaterally come to the assistance of any country in the Middle East which is the victim of international communism and requests aid and assistance from the United States. Before King Hussein placed a large part of the blame on "international communism" for Jordan's present troubles, the White House issued an announcement that the United States regarded "the independence and integrity of Jordan as vital". This could be tied in with that part of the Eisenhower resolution which reads as follows:

The United States regards as vital to the national interest and world peace the preservation of the independence and integrity of the nations of the Middle East.

Following up the White House statement and Hussein's broadcast, orders have been issued to the FORESTAL and other units of the American Sixth Fleet now anchored off the Riviera to proceed to the eastern end of the Mediterranean. It appears to me that events are building up toward a showdown in Jordan and that it is quite possible that this country will become involved if events are not brought under control.

Under the Eisenhower resolution the responsibility rests with the President to make the necessary decisions. The section pertaining to his responsibility reads as follows:
The United States regards as vital to the national interest and world peace the preservation of the independence and integrity of the nations of the Middle East. To this end, if the President determines the necessity thereof, the United States is prepared to use armed forces to assist any such nation or group of such nations requesting assistance against armed aggression from any country controlled by international communism.

The implications in the Jordanian crisis are many and dangerous. The hands of Egypt and Syria are quite apparent in the reported plane trip this morning by the President of Syria and his chief of staff to Cairo. Undoubtedly, moves will be discussed there to consider the situation in Jordan. The Jordanians have sealed off the Syrian border; King Feisal of Iraq, Hussein's cousin, has moved in, it is reported, two brigades into Jordan; and, according to reports, King Saud of Saudi Arabia has placed the 3500 Saudi-Arabian troops in Jordan at the disposal of Hussein. There is no question but that the Soviet Union is and has been fishing in the troubled waters of the Middle East. There is no question but that there are communist groups operating in Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. There is no question but that if the Jordanian crisis is not settled, there will be a break-out of hostilities which will involve not only Syria, Egypt, and Jordan, and perhaps Iraq and Saudi Arabia, but also Israel as well. What would develop out of such a situation
no one can with certainty foretell. However, all the ingredients of a major war are incorporated into the Middle East area. The question will devolve itself soon upon the President of the United States to determine whether or not our interests and security are involved in that area and, if so, what courage this country should pursue. His is a great and grave responsibility.