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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Letter dated 9 April 1970 from the Permanent Representative of Israel
to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to refer to the letter addressed to you on 8 April 1970 by the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Republic (A/7969, S/9744).

A year ago Egypt repudiated the cease-fire and unleashed against Israel what its President calls the "war of attrition", which, as you and the Security Council have repeatedly been informed, compels Israel to have recourse to its right to self-defence.

Yesterday, at 0915 hours local time, air action was undertaken against Egyptian military installations situated at Salahiye. Air photographs taken shortly before that action show clearly identifiable military installations and military transport. Photographs of the same area after the action confirm that only these military targets were hit.

The letter from the Egyptian representative is a crude attempt to conceal the true facts. The letter claims that the Israeli action was directed against the village of Houssaneya. It is true that press reports from Egypt state that the correspondents were taken to Houssaneya, but they add that this place is at least fifteen kilometres from the target.

Indeed the following distortions of fact emerge from press dispatches from Egypt:

1. In an obvious manoeuvre to hide the military nature of the target, the Egyptian authorities prevented the journalists from visiting it. As stated,

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they were taken to Houssaneya, a place at least fifteen kilometres away. The explanation of the Egyptian authorities was that the road to the target at Salahiye was difficult to traverse. This was a lame excuse because Houssaneya, where the correspondents were led, is situated on a side road, while Salahiye lies astride a main highway. In any event, the correspondents could have travelled to Salahiye from Houssaneya by the same road on which the wounded had been transported from Salahiye to the hospital at Houssaneya.

2. The Egyptian authorities brought before the correspondents the director of a school at Houssaneya. No witness, however, appeared from the school allegedly attacked at Salahiye.

3. The correspondents report from Houssaneya that some of the wounded boys they saw in the hospital were dressed in khaki uniform and apparently participated in pre-military training in the Salahiye camp. Thus the Associated Press cable, datelined Cairo, 8 April, states:

"Correspondents were not taken to the school because, according to the officials, it was 'too far and the road too bad'. Some of the wounded boys seen by correspondents were in green khaki uniform - the usual dress of the Egyptian schools' 'National Guard', which is composed of pupils who receive civil defence training."

4. The Egyptian communiqué and the United Arab Republic representative's letter both state that the target is eighty kilometres north of Cairo. They merely omit to add that it is in the zone of hostilities about thirty kilometres west of Qantara.

5. Seven hours elapsed between the air action at 0915 hours and the first Egyptian communiqué at 1620 hours. Obviously this long interval was needed to enable the Government of the United Arab Republic to make up its mind how to present its distortions to the outside world.

If, as is alleged by the United Arab Republic, the casualties included a number of youths, responsibility lies with the Egyptian authorities for having placed them in a distinctly military installation. In any event, the Government of Israel regrets the loss of life on either side resulting from Egypt's disregard for the cease-fire. The casualties are a direct consequence of Egypt's repudiation of the cease-fire and Egypt's continued aggression against Israel.

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The only way to prevent such casualties is for the United Arab Republic to terminate the "war of attrition" declared by it in 1969 and to reaffirm the cease-fire established by the Security Council.

I have the honour to request that this letter be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

(Signed) Yosef TEKOAH
Permanent Representative of Israel
to the United Nations
