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NOTE BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON EFFORTS OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
TRUCE SUPERVISION ORGANIZATION TO RELIEVE TENSION ALONG THE  
LINE BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

1. Documents S/7432 and S/7433 present factual information concerning the situations referred to in the letters to the President of the Security Council of 21 and 22 July 1966 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Permanent Representative of Israel, respectively (S/7419 and S/7423). It may be useful to add to these reports a note on the efforts of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) to relieve tensions on the Israel-Syria border in recent weeks.
2. In May 1966, the situation along parts of the line between Israel and Syria deteriorated swiftly and seriously. The deterioration was brought to the attention of the Security Council in two letters from the Permanent Representative of Syria (S/7288 and S/7320, dated 11 and 24 May 1966), to which the Permanent Representative of Israel replied on 16 May (S/7296) and on 29 May (S/7326).
3. The increasing tension was closely watched by the Chairman of the Israel-Syria Mixed Armistice Commission and by the Chief of Staff, UNTSO. During May of 1966 the Chief of Staff conferred with Israeli and Syrian authorities and, by early June, he had concluded that action should be taken to establish, as far as possible, a calmer atmosphere along the Armistice Demarcation Line. He, accordingly, in oral approaches to both sides, referred to the paragraph of the 11 August 1949 resolution, in which the Security Council "reaffirmed, pending the final peace settlement, the order contained in its resolution of 15 July 1948 to the Governments and authorities concerned, pursuant to Article 40 of the Charter of the United Nations to observe an unconditional cease-fire," and proposed the fulfilment by both sides of the obligation to observe an unconditional cease-fire. He also proposed simultaneous visits by United Nations Military Observers in the Demilitarized Zone and the defensive areas created on both sides by Article V of the General Armistice Agreement. The United Nations Military Observers would

ascertain whether allegations concerning the building-up of forces were founded and, if they were, to what extent. If there was no build-up of forces in the Demilitarized Zone and the defensive areas, and if the unconditional cease-fire was observed, the problems of land cultivation could be studied in a calmer atmosphere.

4. Both sides accepted these proposals, and the visits to the Demilitarized Zone and the defensive areas took place on 13 June. They were completed without restrictions or incidents, and the Chief of Staff wrote to the two parties identical letters on the results of these visits. The texts of these letters are attached as Annex A.

5. On 29 June, the Chairman of the Mixed Armistic Commission was advised by the Israel Delegation that Israel farmers would commence cultivating that day in the southern Demilitarized Zone a field (the so-called "booster field"), the limits of which had not yet been agreed upon. In a message sent to the Chief of Staff on 29 June, when he was informed of the Israel intention, the Chief of Staff of the Syrian Arab Forces referred to his conversation with the Chief of Staff, UNWISO, of 7 June. He had then promised that, in order to facilitate the efforts of the Chief of Staff to relieve tension, there would be no Arab cultivation in certain disputed lands in the area immediately north of Lake Tiberias. In his message on 29 June to the Chief of Staff, UNWISO, the Chief of Staff of the Syrian Arab Forces stated that, if the Israelis insisted now on cultivating disputed land in the southern Demilitarized Zone, the Syrians would not open fire, but would send farmers into land which on 7 June they had agreed not to cultivate pending the results of the efforts of the Chief of Staff. There would then be "cultivation against cultivation". In informing the Israel authorities of the Syrian position, the Chief of Staff, UNWISO, pointed out that competitive cultivation might void the possibility of a solution to the problems which both parties said they wished solved. The Chief of Staff appealed to Israel for cessation of the cultivation they had started in the southern Demilitarized Zone. To leave time to the Chief of Staff to work out a settlement, Israel agreed to a one week cessation. This delay has been twice prolonged, first till 21 July, then till 28 July. A new prolongation would be desirable to facilitate the pursuit of conversations of

cultivation problems. These problems concern, in particular, three areas where long-standing disputes have caused many firing incidents as well as some casualties, both this year and in previous years, namely: the area immediately north of Lake Tiberias and the Dardara (Ashmora) area east of Lake Huleh, both in the central sector of the Demilitarized Zone; and the southern sector of the Demilitarized Zone, in particular, that part known as the Haon fields. It is the view of the Chief of Staff that such conversations should be pursued and are desired by both parties.

6. After the incidents of 13 and 14 July, the Chief of Staff, UNWISO, addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel and to the Chief of Staff of the Syrian Arab Forces the following identical communication:

"It is my duty to express my deepest concern for the situation which has developed during the last two days. Four mining incidents which occurred in Israel close to the Armistice Demarcation Line, the first on the night of 12 to 13 July, the second on 13 July and the fourth on the morning of 14 July, have resulted in the death of two Israelis; two others were wounded.

"Today, 14 July, the Government of Israel responded with air attacks on Syrian territory, the results of which, including casualties, are still unknown.

"I appeal to both parties to re-establish the unconditional cease-fire to which both had agreed at the beginning of June 1966.

"Despite the deplorable events of the last two days, I intend to continue conversations with both sides and try to settle the cultivation problems which have been the origin of too many serious incidents. Efforts to reduce tension through negotiations must be pursued so long as there is a will to succeed."

7. On 15 July, the Chief of Staff received the Israel answer. Israel was ready to re-establish the unconditional cease-fire, provided Syria did likewise. Israel also noted the intention of the Chief of Staff to continue conversations with both sides with a view to settling the cultivation problems and welcomed all efforts to reduce tension through negotiations.

8. The Chief of Staff received the Syrian answer orally during his meeting with the Chief of Staff of the Syrian Arab Forces, arranged for 16 July. The Syrian answer was also positive, and the discussions, which the Syrian Chief of Staff and the Chief of Staff, UNWISO, had decided to pursue on Israel/Syrian disputes

S/7454  
English  
Page 4

about cultivation problems continued, as agreed, on 16 July. The formal statement of the Syrian point of view, dated 24 July, has just been received by the Chief of Staff and is under study. It is the intention of the Chief of Staff to pursue his conversations on the problems of cultivation, a settlement of which would greatly help in relaxing the present tension between the two countries.

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ANNEX A

Letter dated 20 June 1966, addressed by the Chief of Staff, UNTSO,  
to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Israel, and to the Chief of  
Staff of the Syrian Arab Forces

I have the honour to report on the visits to the Demilitarized Zones and defensive areas carried out on 13 June. Those visits took place after both parties had agreed to my proposal, for "simultaneous visits by United Nations Military Observers to the Demilitarized Zone and the defensive areas on both sides to ascertain whether the accusations of building up forces are founded, and, if they are founded, to what extent".

I note with appreciation the co-operation extended by the liaison officers of both sides who accompanied the fourteen teams of United Nations Military Observers who were able to carry out their visits conscientiously, without experiencing any restrictions in respect of freedom of movement.

No evidence of a military build-up - in the form of troops, equipment, weapons or fortifications - was found on either side in the Demilitarized Zone. Only small numbers of light machine guns and individual weapons and of military or para-military personnel were observed both in Israeli and Arab areas. Similarly, fortifications, which had been noted on previous visits (in 1960, 1962, and 1963) were observed in the same areas. These are violations of paragraphs (A) and (B) of article V of the General Armistice Agreement between Israel and Syria. The chairman of Ismac will bring these violations to the attention of the party concerned. In the defensive areas there was no evidence of a build-up or concentration on either side. The number of military personnel and allowed equipment observed on both sides was below the strength authorized under annex IV of the General Armistice Agreement. A limited amount of prohibited military equipment was, however, observed on both sides: armoured half-tracks in the case of Israel, immobile tanks and light anti-aircraft guns in the case of Syria. Similar violations of the Armistice Agreement have been noted on previous visits. They will be brought to the attention of the party concerned.

S/7434  
English  
Annex  
Page 2

In conclusion, I wish to express my thanks for your co-operation, which helped in the successful completion of the visits. I hope that the relaxation of tension that accompanied these visits will continue and permit efforts to be made in a calmer atmosphere to solve the problems, in particular the cultivation problems, which have given rise to regrettable incidents.

