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LETTER DATED 14 JULY 1966 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ISRAEL
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour, on instructions from my Government, to draw the attention of the Security Council to the latest developments on the Israel-Syrian border.

There has been a sudden recrudescence of sabotage and road-mining attacks in Israel border areas, carried out from Syria. In the last two days, the following four incidents have taken place:

(a) In the early hours of 13 July, a storage shed containing farm insecticides was blown up by charges of dynamite near Metulla, in the northeast corner of Israel, close to the junction of the Israel, Syrian and Lebanese borders. The footprints of two men led towards the Syrian border.

(b) On 13 July at 1515 hours, an army vehicle was blown up by a land mine at the village of Almagor, at a place about 800 metres from the Syrian border. The vehicle was occupied at the time by two soldiers guarding land reclamation work in the Almagor fields, together with the civilian foreman of the work. The foreman was killed outright and the two soldiers seriously injured. One of them has since died. The tracks of two men led towards the Syrian border in the direction of the fortified Syrian military position close to the confluence of the Jordan River with Lake Tiberias. The fragments indicate that the mine was of a British type used by the Syrian Army.

Near this same spot two Almagor farmers were killed on 16 May last, when their vehicle was also blown up on a road mine (as reported to the President of the Security Council in my letter S/7296 of 16 May 1966). It will be recalled that in August 1963, two young Almagor farmers were murdered in the same vicinity by Syrian military ambush.

(c) On 13 July at 1900 hours a tractor was blown up by a land mine placed on the dirt track between the villages of Mahanayim and Ayelet Hashachar. The tractor driver, a fifteen-year-old youth from the village of Ayelet Hashachar, was seriously wounded. The tracks of two men led from the scene of the mine-laying towards the Syrian border.

(d) On 14 July, at 0450 hours, one of the dwelling houses at the edge of Kfar Yuval, an Israel village close to the northern border, was blown up by a dynamite charge. Fortunately it was unoccupied at the time. A second charge of dynamite was discovered before it exploded. Footprints of three men, with rubber-soled footwear, led from the Syrian border to the scene of the explosion.

These four incidents within approximately twenty-four hours spread out along the length of the border from Lake Tiberias to Metullah, and occurring after about two weeks of relative calm, indicate a deliberate and concerted attempt to aggravate the situation and increase tension.

From February of this year there have already been ten cases of sabotage and mining attacks in Israel territory, carried out from Syria, and ninety-three instances of the Syrian armed forces opening fire on or setting fire to crops and fields. As a result of these constant Syrian attacks, directed against Israeli civilian habitations and activities in the border area, there have been sixteen Israel casualties, including four killed and considerable damage to property, equipment and installations.

In considering these sabotage and mining operations, it should be borne in mind that the Syrian side of the frontier is heavily fortified, and no such operations could be carried out except with the knowledge and aid of the Syrian armed forces, or actually by Syrian soldiers, as has undoubtedly been the case with the mine-laying incidents.

In the face of this provocation, the Israel Government has been behaving with a maximum of self-restraint. For the last two months the Government has made every possible effort through the United Nations and diplomatic channels to persuade the Syrian authorities to put an end to acts of murder, sabotage and violence, to observe a strict cease-fire, and to co-operate in pacifying the border. All these efforts have proved of no avail. On the contrary, the pronouncements by Syrian leaders and by the government-controlled Damascus Radio have become steadily more bellicose, and

amount to an open incitement to war. For instance, in a speech on 9 July, Dr. Yussuf Zuayyia, Prime Minister of Syria, stated:

"The course for the liberation of Palestine is a popular war. Many people in the world have preceded us along this course and have offered thousands of martyrs but finally triumphed." (Damascus Radio Domestic Service in Arabic, 0415 hours GMT, 10 July 1966)

Again, on 11 July, Damascus Radio declared:

"Let us open a front with Israel.... Why should not the slogan of this front be the popular liberation war." (Damascus Radio Domestic Service in Arabic, 1845 hours GMT, 11 July 1966)

After the outrages of the last two days, and especially the grave incident at Almagor yesterday, planes of the Israel Air Force were ordered today to take strictly limited action regarded as appropriate under the circumstances. They carried out a brief attack to the southeast of Almagor on Syrian tractors and mechanical equipment, a type of target which has been under constant Syrian attack in the same Israel area. The planes carried out their mission and returned safely to their base. This action was meant to impress upon the Syrian authorities the gravity with which the Israel Government views continual Syrian violence against Israel's population and territory.

Israel is deeply concerned with keeping the border quiet and ensuring freedom from harassment and attack for the local population. These conditions cannot exist on one side, but only when both parties respect their reciprocal obligation to preserve the peace. Experience has amply proved that the Syrian authorities are able to prevent incidents and maintain tranquillity on the border whenever they choose to do so.

I have the honour to request that this letter be circulated as a Security Council document.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) Michael COMAY
Permanent Representative
