

SECURITY
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LETTER DATED 21 DECEMBER 1955 FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE OF ISRAEL
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

In connection with the discussion now proceeding in the Security Council, I have the honour to bring to the attention of the Council certain documents which were found in Syrian army positions on the eastern shore of Lake Tiberias on the night of 11/12 December 1955.

Photographic copies of these documents, together with their translations from the original Arabic into English, are appended hereto as Appendices 1 to 4. As will be seen, they comprise Army Headquarters, Brigade and outpost orders concerning military operations on Lake Tiberias.

For a proper understanding of these orders it is necessary to recapitulate the provisions of the General Armistice Agreement between Israel and Syria concerning the Armistice Demarcation Line between the two countries:

Article V, paragraph 3:

The Armistice Demarcation Line shall be as delineated on the map attached to this Agreement as Annex I. The Armistice Demarcation Line shall follow a line midway between the existing truce lines, as certified by the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation for Israeli and Syrian forces. Where the existing truce lines run along the international boundary between Syria and Palestine, the Armistice Demarcation Line shall follow the boundary line.

Article V, paragraph 4:

The armed forces of the two Parties shall nowhere advance beyond the Armistice Demarcation Line.

Article IV, paragraph 3:

Rules and regulations of the armed forces of the Parties, which prohibit civilians from crossing the fighting lines or entering the area between the lines, shall remain in effect after the signing

of this Agreement, with application to the Armistice Demarcation Line defined in Article V, subject to the provisions of paragraph 18 of that article.

Note: Paragraph 5 of Article V deals with the demilitarized zones and is not germane to this issue.

According to the map referred to in Article V paragraph 3 as annex to the Armistice Demarcation Line in the northeastern corner of Lake Tiberias, the former international frontier between Palestine and Syria. The precise demarcation is made in the text of paragraph 18 of the annex, which follows:

From MR.207.4-256.0, Southward along the Syrian-Palestinian border to BP 61, MR 210.6-246.3.

The Syrian-Palestinian border referred to in this context was defined in the Anglo-French Agreement of 1923* as follows:

"...From the mouth of the Jordan to the Sulphur Springs at Messifer, where is placed cairn 61, the frontier follows a line on the shore parallel to and at 10 metres from the edge of Lake Tiberias, following any alteration of level consequent on the raising of its waters owing to the construction of a dam on the Jordan south of Lake Tiberias.

It follows therefore that the whole of Lake Tiberias, together with a 10 metre strip of land on its northeastern shore, lies within the territory of Israel. According to the General Armistice Agreement, Syrian troops and civilians are prohibited from crossing the 10 metre strip and encroaching on the Lake for any purpose. They are, ipso facto, prohibited from interfering with any Israeli activities conducted on the Lake and on the 10 metre strip. This prohibition was endorsed in specific terms by the Israel-Syrian Armistice Commission which, at an emergency meeting on 15 March, 1954, adopted a resolution paragraph 6 of which reads as follows:

* Exchange of Notes constituting an Agreement between the British and French Governments respecting the Boundary between Syria and Palestine from the Mediterranean to El Hamme (Paris, March 7, 1923).
League of Nations Treaty Series, Vol. XXII, page 364,
Registration No. 565.

"The Mixed Armistice Commission calls upon the Syrian Authorities to ensure no interference, whatsoever with any Israeli activities in Lake Tiberias and on the 10 metre strip and/or no crossing whatsoever into Israel."

The Syrian documents appended to this letter demonstrate the complete disregard by the Syrian authorities of these provisions of the Armistice Agreement.

According to an Organisational Order of the 16th Battalion, 3rd Brigade, dated 21 December 1953 (Appendix 3), Syria at that time arrogated to itself jurisdiction over "territorial waters" extending 400 metres into Lake Tiberias, and threatened to open fire on any Israel vessel approaching the shore inside this limit.

The "claim" was reduced to 250 metres in an Organisational Order of the Third Bureau, Syrian Army Headquarters, signed by the Chief of Staff, General S. Shukeir on 14 March 1954 (Appendix 1). Under the terms of this order, Israel police patrol boats were to be fired upon if they entered these so-called "territorial waters", while Israel fishing vessels attempting to land on the 10 metre Israeli strip of shore were to be similarly attacked.

The Syrian arrogation of jurisdiction over the 250 metre strip of lake was renewed as recently as 8 November 1955 in an Organisational Order of the Third Bureau, South-Western Front Headquarters, Syrian Army (Appendix 2). In this order Syrian fishermen from Buteiha and El Koursi were instructed not to offer opposition to Israel fishermen provided they came no nearer than 250 metres from the shore.

A further order, in this case the standing operation order of the Douga outpost, signed on 3 November 1955 by Mulazim (First Lieutenant) Kaziz, Commander of the Northern Sub-Section of the 2nd Company, 5th Battalion, proves that the Douga outpost encroached on the Israeli 10 metre strip on the shore of Lake Tiberias (the outpost bazooka gun was sited 6 metres from the shore line), and that it was instructed to open fire on all Israeli vessels within effective range (Appendix 4).

These documents were identified and verified on 18 December in the presence of a United Nations Observer, by a Syrian prisoner of war, No. 104409,

2nd Lieutenant Walid Yussef 'Aani of the 2nd Company, 5th Battalion. Lieutenant 'Aani, who had been in command of the Douga outpost, further testified that his immediate superior, Mulazim Kaziz, had ordered him on 10 December 1955 to open fire with the bazooka as soon as one of the police patrol vessels came into effective range. He actually opened that day with the bazooka and one of the light machine guns.

These documents lead to conclusions of the utmost importance and they prove that:

- (a) Syrian positions, established both in Syrian territory and a strip of Israel territory, have had as their avowed objective forcible denial to Israel of peaceful activity in Israel
- (b) These Syrian positions were also intended to establish, by force and threat of force, a Syrian claim to the control of Israel including a part of Lake Tiberias;
- (c) The attacks on Israeli craft, including that of 10 December, were not isolated incidents, but were, on the contrary, part of a purposeful effort to transfer from Israel to Syria the effective control of a part of Lake Tiberias and Israel territory on its northeastern shore.

The Government of Israel cannot avoid taking a most serious view of the threats by Syria to Israel's territorial integrity and to the peace and security of the Middle East.

In the course of the current discussions the Delegation of Israel requests the Security Council to take effective action against these Syrian encroachments.

I have the honour to request that this letter, together with the documents attached to it as appendices,* be circulated to all members of the Security Council.

Please, accept, Sir, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) Abba Eban
Permanent Representative of
Israel to the United Nations

* Note: The Syrian Army orders attached to this letter as Appendices 1-4 were transmitted from Israel by wire-photo. The photographs are thus not clear, although their content is identifiable, and, to a considerable degree, legible. Copies of the documents in their present form have been made available, for purposes of record, to all the members of the Security Council. Clear copies will be supplied as soon as they are received by mail.

APPENDIX 1
(Translation)

TOP SECRET

Republic of Syria
Army Headquarters
Third Bureau

14.3.54

Organisational Order

There have been cases of clashes between our outposts on the shore of Lake Tiberias and Israeli military war craft and their fishing boats, as a result of misinterpreting the orders with regard to opening fire or unfamiliarity with the limits of the Syrian territorial waters in the Lake of Tiberias.

Having taken up the matter with the Commander of the South-Western Front and with the Senior Syrian Delegate to the Mixed Syrian-Israel Armistice Commission, and after fishing rights have been granted to Arabs residing on this shore, and with effect from this date, the following instructions should be carried out:

1. The Syrian territorial waters in Lake Tiberias shall be considered as extending 250 metres from the shore.
2. Fire is to be opened at Israel war vessels on entering the 250 metre limit of Syrian territorial waters.
3. Fishing boats should not be fired at unless attempting to land.

Sgd. Chief of Staff
Gen. S. Shukeir

APPENDIX 2
(Translation)

Army of Syria
H.Q. South-Western Front
Third Bureau.

Fishing Season on Lake Tiberias 1955-1956
8 November 1955

Organisational Order

Following the letter of the Senior Syrian Delegate of 2 November, 1955 and in order to prevent incidents between fishermen and the Israel police, fishing on Lake Tiberias will be forbidden from the date of this order until further notice.

Sector Commanders (Central and Southern Sectors) will carry out this order and will instruct fishermen of Buteiha and El Koursi not to offer opposition to Israel fishermen provided the latter stay away from the eastern shore for a distance of at least 250 metres.

Sgd. Commander of the
South-Western Front
Col. Nofal Shaham

Copy to H.Q. Central Sector
(3rd Bureau) To carry out these instructions and ensure the fishermen's safety
Copy to Sub-Sector Commanders responsible for carrying out these instructions.

Sgd. Commander Central Sector
Lt. Col. Toufic Shatila

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APPENDIX 2 (Con't)

Date 13.11.55

The Army - 1st Brigade
Infantry Battalion No. 18

Copy of original distributed to Commanders of Support Sectors First - Second and outposts of Hassel, Tel-Elawar Duka (Further to organisational order issued by Battalion H.Q. on 5.11.55 prohibiting fishing at Lake Tiberias you are being requested to inform the fishermen concerned accordingly).

Sgd. Commander 18 Infantry Battalion
Capt. George Zinawa.

APPENDIX 3
(Translation)

Army of Syria
3rd Brigade
16th Battalion

Organizational Order

In accordance with a message received from the Central Sector and from Headquarters, 3rd Brigade, 3rd Bureau, a Jewish fishing vessel was seen towing other armoured war vessels which have lately been plying the Lake of Tiberias day and night at a distance less than 200 metres off the Syrian shore and which have often directed searchlights at Syrian outposts. United Nations Military Observers have been requested to insure that no such boats approach the Syrian shore nearer than 400 metres and have been informed that any such vessel approaching the shore inside the 400 metre limit in future will be fired on immediately.

On behalf of 16th Infantry Battalion for action of Company and outpost commanders (Lake of Tiberias), 21st December 1953.

Note: This document is for the time being only available in translation.

APPENDIX 4
(Translation)

Sector No. 4, Northern Sub-Sector

Order for Defence of Douga Outpost

Password: W-1

Mission: Desperate defence of outpost

Strength: 1 Sergeant, 2 corporals, 5 privates

Armament: 1 Hispano-Suiza, 2 light machine guns, 1 bazooka

Ammunition: 1 allotment

Communication: telephone

Fortifications: Existing fortifications and their upkeep

Supply and first aid: Aid will be maintained by battalion through Douga and Koural

Communication with neighbouring positions: In daytime, visually; at night,
through armed patrols.

Fire tasks: Fire will be opened and stopped on order of outpost commander.

Information on friendly forces: 7th Battalion holds line North of Masadieh
and Hassel to the South of the place of the
outpost.

Information on enemy: Enemy holds Northern part of Lake.

Steps to be taken on the approach of the enemy: Inform friendly forces and
Headquarters, and open effective fire on
confirmation by Headquarters in accordance
with fire plan and fire orders.

Location of Company Commander: Hill 69.

Location of Platoon Commander: Place of outpost.

1. Hispano-Suiza gun: Position: Tongue of land 50 metres South of outpost.
Alternate position: 30 metres South-East.

APPENDIX 4 (Con't.)

- (a) Ground tasks: Open fire on boats approaching shore within effective range within traverse from Hassel towards North. and along shore Southwards within effective range.
 - (b) Anti-aircraft tasks: Open anti-aircraft fire on aircraft within effective range of weapons.
2. Northern Light Machine-Gun: Position: From North of Northern Keena Tree.
Alternate position: Between Northern tree and adjacent tree.
- (a) Main task: Covering length of Northern shore of outpost to prevent landing.
 - (b) Secondary task: Open fire on boats approaching outpost.
3. Southern Light Machine-Gun: Position: South of Hispano gun in an open trench.
Alternate position: 20 metres South of above.
- (a) Main task: Cover the whole length of the shore South of the outpost, to prevent landing.
 - (b) Secondary task: Open fire on boats approaching outpost.
4. Bazooka: Position: In front of outpost at a distance of 6 metres from the shore.
Alternate position: Communication trenches around outpost.
Task: Destroy armour that succeeds in breaking into outpost from North or South.
- (A copy of this order will be kept in the special file of the outpost Commander).

3 November 1955, 5th Battalion, 2nd Company
Sgd. Commander of Northern Subsector
First Lieut. Said Kaziz.

Note: Local defence unit will participate in the defence of outposts under the command of outpost commander and will be employed effectively according to need.
