

UNITED NATIONS
SECURITY
COUNCIL



Distr.
GENERAL

S/4166
24 February 1959
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

LETTER DATED 23 FEBRUARY 1959 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF FRANCE ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour, upon instructions from my Government, to inform you that the letter addressed to you on 16 February by the representative of Tunis (S/4163) calls for the following explanation.

The statement by the Tunisian Secretariat of State for Information that on 14 February a group of local inhabitants engaged in a locust control campaign was attacked by French aircraft in Tunisian territory at the place known as Alep Ratma, twenty-one kilometres west of Nefta, was the subject of a denial on 15 February by the General Staff of the Commander-in-Chief of the forces in Algeria.

The French Government duly ordered a detailed inquiry and the inquiry confirmed that no air operations were carried out by the French air forces over Tunisian territory on 14 February. An operation was, however, carried out on that day over French territory under the following circumstances:

About 100 rebels in uniform, coming from Tunisia and escorting twenty camels and fifteen mules, crossed the Algero-Tunisian border and penetrated into Algeria to a point ninety kilometres north of El-Ouï and ten kilometres west of Chott Rharsa. At that point, which is inside French territory and ten kilometres west of the border, the convoy was intercepted by three French aircraft which opened fire, scattering the caravan which withdrew towards Tunisian territory in separate groups.

There was therefore no violation of Tunisian territory or air space by French forces.

The wounded shown to journalists by the Tunisian authorities at Tozeur on 16 February cannot therefore have been the victims of an incident which occurred in Tunisian territory. It will be noted, moreover, that according to witnesses all the wounded were of the male sex, which is surprising if they

S/4166
English
Page 2

had been engaged in the locust control campaign as locust eggs are normally collected by women in the area in question.

In the circumstances, the French Government can only deny the facts stated in the letter of the representative of Tunisia to the Security Council.

It also rejects the accusations concerning the systematic and repeated attacks on Tunisian territory allegedly made by French forces from Algeria.

On the other hand, it must point out that the numerous border incidents which have for several months prompted protests by the French authorities have shown that Tunisian territory is used by the rebels as a base for their activities in Algeria. The incident of 14 February is further proof of the aid found by the rebels in Tunisia.

I should be grateful if you would circulate this letter in the same way as the communication dated 16 February from the Tunisian Government.

I have the honour to be, etc....

(Signed) G. GEORGES-PICOT
Ambassador and Permanent
Representative

