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REPORT OF THE OFFICER-IN-CHARGE OF THE UNITED NATIONS OPERATION IN THE CONGO TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL, RELATING TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PARAGRAPH A-2 OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION OF 21 FEBRUARY 1961

Report of the Officer-In-Charge of the United Nations Operation in the Congo concerning the situation in Elisabethville (Part III)

(A) Developments from 8 through 14 December 1961

1. During the period from 8 through 14 December the United Nations forces at Elisabethville continued their defensive actions to secure freedom of movement and to restore law and order. Pending the arrival of reinforcements, most of their efforts had to be devoted to holding their positions and maintaining communications between them.
2. The first essential was to secure the road between the airfield and the town. The Katanga forces had built up strong positions along that road even while pretending to negotiate with the United Nations to have the Katangese roadblock on it removed. Even after the United Nations removed the roadblock by force on the afternoon of 5 December,^{1/} the road continued to be insecure owing to mortar fire and constant sniping. The desire of the ONUC forces to cause the very minimum of damage to life and property increased the difficulty of clearing the road.
3. One Katangese position was at the Sabena guest house, in which there were ten civilian employees of Sabena, as well as the gendarmerie holding the position. The Katanga forces were cleared out by the morning of 8 December, and the civilians, who were unharmed, were later evacuated to Leopoldville. Closer to town than the guest house is a new many-storeyed building intended for use as a hospital, but not yet used as such. The gendarmerie mortar position there

^{1/} S/4940/Add.16, section E.

was silenced by ONUC mortars on 7 December, but the building was afterwards again used as a mortar position and observation post against United Nations troops. This made it imperative for United Nations troops to occupy the position, which they did on 12 December.

4. On the evening of 8 December Mr. George Ivan Smith, the Acting United Nations Representative, and Brigadier Raja, the Commander of the ONUC Katanga Command, were finally able to return in an armoured convoy from the airfield to their headquarters in Elisabethville, from which they had been cut off since 4 December. They encountered brisk fire from sniping on the way.

5. Meanwhile the Katanga forces on 8 December mounted an attack on the airfield. The attacking column was led by a tank converted locally from a bulldozer. The tank was destroyed by the first shot from the ONUC forces, and the attack was repulsed. A Katangese truck convoy bringing up guns and ammunition was also destroyed by an ONUC air strike in the vicinity of the airfield. On the night of 10-11 December the airfield was attacked by hostile aircraft; twenty-six bombs were dropped, but no damage was done. Hostile aircraft again bombed the airfield on the night of 14-15 December. Numerous Katanga patrols were seen in the area, particularly on 11 and 12 December, and the United Nations forces there had to patrol intensively in order to prevent sniping at ONUC aircraft approaching for landing.

6. In other directions from town there was also hostile activity by the Katanga forces. One of the gravest problems for ONUC was the Baluba refugee camp east of Elisabethville. About 45,000 to 50,000 Balubas, a substantial part of the town's work force, had taken refuge from the persecutions of the Tshombe regime on a bare piece of ground where they formed a dense mass, protected from the elements only by improvised mud huts. After 5 December the Katanga gendarmerie, in barbarous violation of the laws of war, repeatedly fired on the camp with mortars and automatic weapons. At last report thirty Balubas were killed and 140 wounded. Because of the firing, the distribution of food by ONUC had to be suspended for several days, but was resumed on 10 December. Much of the strength of ONUC was devoted to securing the approaches of the camp, so as to protect the Balubas from the gendarmerie and to protect the town from incursions of Balubas seeking revenge.

7. To the north-east of town, the Katanga gendarmerie on 12 December made a desperate attempt to cut off the Swedish and Irish camps from Headquarters by setting up a roadblock near a petrol storage point. United Nations troops had to clear the roadblock; during the action Katangese mortar shells set fire to the stored petrol, which burned uncontrollably all night.
8. An objective of ONUC to the east of town was the transmitter of Radio Katanga, which continued to pour forth its appeals to the population to use poisoned arrows and to assassinate United Nations troops. A heavy concentration of gendarmerie were engaged by ONUC on 8 December around the transmitter, and on the afternoon of the same day the transmitter was damaged by United Nations jet attack.
9. South of the central part of Elisabethville, on the way to the African city, lies Camp Massart, renamed "Camp President Tshombe" by the Katangese, which has been the main stronghold of the gendarmerie. The camp was a centre for mortar fire against United Nations troops. On 10 December United Nations aircraft strafed the camp.
10. ONUC Headquarters on the north-west edge of Elisabethville continued to be subjected to heavy fire from mortars and machine-guns. Much of this fire came from settled areas where there were many civilians, and the United Nations forces replied very sparingly or not at all. ONUC co-operated with Red Cross officials to evacuate civilians from the area, and also on 8 December sent out armoured cars equipped with loudspeakers to assure civilians that they would be safe provided they did not fire on United Nations troops or harbour snipers, mercenaries or gendarmes firing on United Nations positions. Two United Nations soldiers at Headquarters were killed by mortar fire on 11 December.
11. In the centre of town, life was very difficult for civilians. There was frequent mortar fire, causing loss of life and damage, and careful investigation proved that it did not come from United Nations troops. The ONUC mortar batteries were for the most part out of range; the one which was within range did not fire in the direction where the damage was done. It seems probable that the Katanga forces or extremist elements were shelling their own city in an effort to inflame the population against the United Nations.

12. The United Nations made one air strike in the centre of Elisabethville on the morning of 9 December. The strike was against the post office, which was being used for Katangese military communications and for the making of inflammatory broadcasts. Previous warning was given, and there were no casualties. Other air attacks were made on 12 and 13 December against the Lido area, resort and park on the south-west edge of town, where there were concentrations of Katangese troops and from where heavy mortar fire had been sustained.

13. The United Nations co-operated in the trip to Elisabethville of an evacuation train from Rhodesia. A condition which ONUC was compelled to make was that the train would be searched by some of the Consuls to ensure that it was not bringing in arms and ammunitions for the Katanga forces. The Consuls, however, were not allowed by the Katangese authorities to inspect the train. Nevertheless 382 women and children were put aboard, and the train returned to Rhodesia on 10 December. It was reported by the Consuls that the gendarmerie caused serious difficulties about the departure of the train before letting it proceed.

14. The Katanga forces consistently used the presence of civilians to shield their activities, while the United Nations forces, to their severe military disadvantage, tried their best to avoid endangering civilian lives and property. The Katangese placed their mortars near hospitals, schools, consultates and private houses. On the evening of 10 December, Katangese armoured cars used the International Institute in the stadium area of northern Elisabethville as a base for an attack on United Nations positions. About 750 refugees had been gathered in the Institute under the auspices of the Red Cross. One armoured car was destroyed while it was attacking, but the United Nations forces could not engage the others because they returned to the shelter of the Institute. The same area continued thereafter to be used for mortar and automatic weapon attacks on ONUC troops.

15. The Katanga forces regularly abused the Red Cross symbol, contrary to the law of war. Many cases were reported. One of them was witnessed on 8 December by Mr. Ivan Smith, when a car bearing a Red Cross flag gave the signal for firing on the convoy in which he was riding back from the airfield. In another case, a Red Cross official saw a car bearing a large Red Cross which was filled with uniformed gendarmes carrying weapons. Though the number of legitimate Red Cross

vehicles in Elisabethville was under ten, ONUC observers counted more than fifty cars bearing painted red crosses or red cross flags. On 10 December Mr. Olivet, the principal representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Elisabethville, asked Radio Katanga to broadcast hourly messages warning against misuse of the Red Cross.

16. The abuses have not ceased, however. Mr. Olivet himself has been missing since the afternoon of 13 December. Since neither the United Nations forces nor the Consuls in Elisabethville have any knowledge of his whereabouts, it is feared that he may have been kidnapped by the Katanga gendarmerie or non-African extremists who found his presence inconvenient. The United Nations immediately instituted with all the means at its disposal an inquiry into the disappearance of Mr. Olivet; unfortunately he has not yet been found or heard from. ONUC also, on 17 December, transported to Elisabethville Mr. Depreux, another representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross, who was sent to search for Mr. Olivet.

(B) Developments from 15 through 18 December

17. The reinforcement of the United Nations troops in Elisabethville was completed on 14 December, and thereafter ONUC could take a more active role in securing freedom of movement, instead of staying within its positions. It was obviously impossible to make a frontal attack on the town because of the heavy damage to civilian lives and property that would have resulted. Consequently it was decided to move around Elisabethville, eliminating all Katangese positions on the edges and establishing control around the perimeter.

18. On the night of 14-15 December, one unit of Indian Gurkha troops cleared the areas along the sides of the road to the airport, while another Gurkha unit on the early morning of the 15th captured the high ground of the golf course not far from ONUC Headquarters, from which mortar fire had been directed on Headquarters by Katangese forces. Gurkhas also moved into the streets at the north end of town, and by the evening of the 15th had restored order in the area of the theatre and destroyed a Katangese armoured car near the stadium. One United Nations officer was wounded in the action. During the whole day the United Nations forces and Headquarters were under heavy mortar fire, and a Gurkha

soldier was killed at Headquarters. The ONUC troops replied to the fire only when it was essential to do so; houses were not fired at unless ONUC forces were attacked from them.

19. Meanwhile, at the eastern edge of town, ONUC troops exchanged mortar fire all day on the 15th with gendarmerie posted at the tunnel under the railway tracks, where Swedish soldiers had been murdered and kidnapped on 3 December. United Nations aircraft also made a strike at the area of the tunnel.

20. The following day, 16 December, United Nations forces attained three important objectives around the edge of the town which had been much used to impede ONUC's freedom of movement. First, ONUC Ethiopian troops before dawn captured the Lido area, to the west of Elisabethville, and moved to gain control of the road to Kipushi and the Rhodesian frontier. The Ethiopians came under intensive fire from the offices of the Union Minière du Haut-Katanga and from other buildings in the area. Six Ethiopians were killed and at least four wounded by this firing.

21. Secondly, Swedish units captured Camp Massart, the main gendarmerie camp in Elisabethville, which covers an extensive area and is surrounded by high walls. Before dawn the Swedish troops came to the river Kampemba, about a thousand yards from the camp, but were unable to cross the bridge in vehicles because of heavy machine-gun fire from the camp itself and also from a nearby building in which the railway company houses its workers. There was heavy rain, the ground was thick with mud and the vehicles had to be abandoned. The Swedish units, under their own covering fire, ran across the bridge or forded the river. Under heavy fire, one unit crawled toward the main gates and another toward the corner of the camp and the villas of the railway employees. At 1030 hours, the first Swedish troops broke through the main gates in a direct assault. Inside the camp, at 1130 hours, there was a strong counterattack from their left flanked by gendarmes led by non-Congolese officers, and considerable hand-to-hand fighting later developed. The camp was completely under ONUC control by 1800 hours. Five Swedish soldiers were wounded, two seriously. In the operation the Swedish troops captured four non-Congolese combatants and three gendarmes.

22. Thirdly, Irish troops captured the tunnel under the railway track. They approached it from several directions, one group crawling along the tracks. The final assault was made at 0600 hours. There was heavy fire by the gendarmerie

from railway cars nearby, and the officer leading the assault along the tracks was killed, as was one of his men. The Irish troops then deployed on the city side of the tunnel.

23. On 17 December the Swedish troops in Camp Massart continued to clear snipers from buildings in the vicinity, and the Irish troops did the same around the tunnel. The Ethiopian troops in the Lido area continued to be subject to heavy mortar, machine-gun and small arms fire from the building of the Union Minière, and, as stated above, six were killed and at least four others wounded. ONUC continued to issue warnings by radio and through consular representatives that if attacks on ONUC did not cease, military measures would have to be taken to stop the firing. Since the beginning of hostilities the United Nations had repeatedly tried, through every channel at its disposal, to prevent Union Minière installations from being used by the gendarmes and mercenaries for military purposes, but without success. As it was clearly impossible to allow the Katanga forces to go on killing United Nations troops, an air strike with rockets and gunfire had to be made on the afternoon of the 17th on those parts of the Union Minière installations from which attacks were being made.

24. On the afternoon of 17 December a Red Cross representative, accompanied by military and civilian personnel of ONUC, visited the Square Uvira area in north Elisabethville to bring food, water and possibly assist in the evacuation of civilians stranded there.

25. There was little change in the situation during the night of 17-18 December. The Ethiopians in the Lido area continued to sustain mortar and small arms fire from the Union Minière buildings, where it appeared that the main body of Katangese forces in Elisabethville had concentrated. Sniping from private houses also continued in parts of the town. Katangese mortars fired with the apparent intention of hitting ONUC Headquarters, but the range was completely missed and the shells landed in residential areas up to 1,000 yards away.

26. On the morning of 18 December an ONUC armoured column made a slow tour through the streets of Elisabethville. There was only one burst of fire against the column, and many Congolese along the route waved at the United Nations forces. Afterwards there were further United Nations armoured patrols to re-establish law and order in the town. One was engaged by a Katangese armoured car near the

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cathedral, but that vehicle was destroyed by an Indian armoured car of ONUC. As it became clear that the ONUC patrols were not attacking but would return fire if attacked, some of them were cheered by the population, Congolese and non-Congolese alike.

27. All possible assistance was given by ONUC to civilians. The Square Uvira area was again visited by United Nations military and civilian personnel on the 18th for humanitarian purposes. During their visit they were the target of sniper fire, but fortunately escaped injury. Brigadier Raja, the Commander of ONUC Katanga Command, issued orders expressly prohibiting breaking into houses unless there was a specific reason - such as sniping - for doing so. He also forbade arrests of the Congolese population and non-Congolese women and children and required detailed information on the circumstances of the capture of non-Congolese men. Some civilians were interrogated by ONUC, but most of them were released.

28. The only area in which the Katanga forces remained very active was the Union Minière buildings, from which heavy fire continued on the Ethiopians. At one time fire from two heavy machine-guns was coming from the Union Minière hospital. ONUC took no military action against them, but at once protested to the representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

