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LETTER DATED 30 OCTOBER 1956 FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED  
KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND ADDRESSED TO THE  
PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to enclose the text of a statement made in the  
House of Commons on October 30 by the Right Honourable Sir Anthony Eden K.G.,  
M.C., M.P., on the present situation in the Middle East.

I request that this statement should be circulated to the members of the  
Security Council for their information.

I have the honour, etc.

(Signed) Pierson Dixon

The following is the text of a statement made on October 30 in the House of Commons by Sir Anthony Eden.

Sir,

With your permission and that of the House I will make a statement. As the House will know for some time past the tension on the frontiers of Israel has been increasing. The growing military strength of Egypt has given rise to renewed apprehension, which the statements and actions of the Egyptian Government have further aggravated. The establishment of a joint military command between Egypt, Jordan and Syria, the renewed raids by guerrillas, culminating in the incursion of Egyptian commandos on Sunday night had all produced a very dangerous situation.

Five days ago news was received that the Israel Government were taking certain measures of mobilisation. Her Majesty's Government at once instructed Her Majesty's Ambassador at Tel Aviv to make enquiries of the Israel Minister for Foreign Affairs and to urge restraint.

Meanwhile, President Eisenhower called for an immediate tripartite discussion between representatives of the United Kingdom, France and the United States. A meeting was held on October 28 in Washington and a second meeting took place on October 29.

While these discussions were proceeding, news was received last night that Israel forces had crossed the frontier and had penetrated deep into Egyptian territory. Later, further reports were received indicating that paratroops had been dropped. It appeared that the Israel spearhead was not far from the banks of the Suez Canal. From recent reports it also appears that air forces are in action in the neighbourhood of the Canal.

During the last few weeks Her Majesty's Government have thought it their duty, having regard to their obligations under the Anglo-Jordan Treaty, to give assurances both public and private of their intention to honour these obligations. Her Majesty's Ambassador in Tel Aviv late last night received an assurance that Israel would not attack Jordan.

My Right Honourable and Learned Friend the Foreign Secretary discussed the situation with the United States Ambassador early this morning. The French Prime Minister and Foreign Minister have come over to London at short notice at the invitation of Her Majesty's Government to deliberate with us on these events.

I must tell the House that very grave issues are at stake, and unless hostilities can quickly be stopped, free passage through the Canal will be jeopardised. Moreover, any fighting on the banks of the Canal would endanger the ships actually on passage. The number of crews and passengers involved totals many hundreds, and the value of the ships which are likely to be on passage is about £50 million, excluding the value of the cargoes. Her Majesty's Government and the French Government have accordingly agreed that everything possible should be done to bring hostilities to an end as soon as possible. Their representatives in New York have therefore been instructed to join the United States representative in seeking an immediate meeting of the Security Council. This began at 4.00 p.m.

In the meantime, as a result of the consultations held in London today, the United Kingdom and French Governments have now addressed urgent communications to the Governments of Egypt and Israel. In these we have called upon both sides to stop all warlike action by land, sea and air forthwith and to withdraw their military forces to a distance of 10 miles from the Canal. Further, in order to separate the belligerents and to guarantee freedom of transit through the Canal by the ships of all nations we have asked the Egyptian Government to agree that Anglo-French forces should move temporarily - I repeat temporarily - into key positions at Port Said, Ismailia and Suez. The Governments of Egypt and Israel have been asked to answer this communication within 12 hours. It has been made clear to them that, if at the expiration of that time one or both have not undertaken to comply with these requirements, British and French forces will intervene in whatever strength may be necessary to secure compliance.

I will continue to keep the House informed of the situation.

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