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57th Conclusions

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CABINET

*CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1,
on Tuesday, 15th July, 1958, at 11.15 a.m.*

Present:

The Right Hon. HAROLD MACMILLAN, M.P., Prime Minister

The Right Hon. R. A. BUTLER, M.P., Secretary of State for the Home Department and Lord Privy Seal.	The Right Hon. VISCOUNT KILMUIR, Lord Chancellor.
The Right Hon. SELWYN LLOYD, Q.C., M.P., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.	The Right Hon. D. HEATHCOAT AMORY, M.P., Chancellor of the Exchequer.
The Right Hon. The EARL OF HOME, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations.	The Right Hon. ALAN LENNOX-BOYD, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies.
The Right Hon. JOHN MACLAY, M.P., Secretary of State for Scotland.	The Right Hon. VISCOUNT HAILSHAM, Q.C., Lord President of the Council.
The Right Hon. DUNCAN SANDYS, M.P., Minister of Defence.	The Right Hon. Sir DAVID ECCLES, M.P., President of the Board of Trade.
The Right Hon. IAIN MACLEOD, M.P., Minister of Labour and National Service.	The Right Hon. HENRY BROOKE, M.P., Minister of Housing and Local Government and Minister for Welsh Affairs.
The Right Hon. LORD MILLS, Minister of Power.	The Right Hon. HAROLD WATKINSON, M.P., Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation.
The Right Hon. GEOFFREY LLOYD, M.P., Minister of Education.	The Right Hon. JOHN HARE, M.P., Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.
Dr. The Right Hon. CHARLES HILL, M.P., Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.	The Right Hon. REGINALD MAUDLING, M.P., Paymaster-General.

The following were also present:

The Right Hon. The EARL OF SELKIRK, First Lord of the Admiralty.	The Right Hon. CHRISTOPHER SOAMES, M.P., Secretary of State for War.
The Right Hon. GEORGE WARD, M.P., Secretary of State for Air.	The Right Hon. AUBREY JONES, M.P., Minister of Supply.
The Right Hon. Sir REGINALD MANNINGHAM-BULLER, Q.C., M.P., Attorney-General.	The Right Hon. EDWARD HEATH, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury.

*Secretariat:*The Right Hon. Sir NORMAN BROOK.
Mr. B. ST. J. TREND.
Mr. J. M. WILSON.

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*Middle East.
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The Prime Minister informed the Cabinet that, in the light of their previous discussion, he had sent a further message to President Eisenhower indicating that we would support the United States Government, both politically and, if they wished, physically, in their proposal to intervene with military force in the Lebanon. But he had also emphasised that we now regarded the conflict in the Lebanon as only one aspect of a critical situation which was developing throughout the Middle East and that we hoped we could rely on the co-operation of the United States in any measures which might become necessary to restore the position in Jordan and Iraq.

The United States Government had now launched the operation against the Lebanon and intended to land American troops, without British military support, at 1 p.m. that day. They proposed to inform the Security Council of this action at an emergency meeting that morning, when they would propose the establishment of a United Nations force in the Lebanon to which the United States force could transfer responsibility for the maintenance of peace and order in the area. But they had given no detailed consideration to the situation in Jordan and they would be unable to offer, until later in the day, considered comment on our suggestion that King Hussein should be invited urgently to make a formal request for United States and United Kingdom military assistance to maintain the integrity of Jordan.

Meanwhile the situation in Iraq remained confused. The insurrection appeared to be confined to Baghdad; and according to an unconfirmed rumour Nuri es-Said had escaped. We had warned the Rulers in Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar to be on their guard against attempted insurrection in their territories; and we were taking such steps as were possible to secure the protection of British lives and property in the Lebanon during the disturbed period which was likely to follow the landing of United States forces.

In discussion it was agreed that the initial response of the United States Government to our proposal for immediate action in Jordan was disappointing. We were entitled, under the Charter of the United Nations, to give King Hussein the assurance, for which he had asked, that we would give him such military assistance as he judged to be necessary for the preservation of the integrity and the independence of his Kingdom. It was also desirable, however, that we should give effect to this assurance by establishing a military force in Jordan as rapidly as possible, before the King could be overthrown or the United Nations had occasion to adopt a resolution condemning the despatch of any further military reinforcements to the Middle East. In taking such action we should need to have the practical support and co-operation of the United States Government, since we should be exposed to grave risks if the United States force in the Lebanon was withdrawn after a temporary occupation and we were left to deal alone with the situation in Jordan and Iraq. It would be undesirable, therefore, to incur a definite commitment to King Hussein until it became clear, later in the day, whether the United States Government had resolved the legal and political difficulties which appeared to inhibit them for the moment from joining us in giving the assurance for which the King had asked. But all possible action should be taken in the interim to encourage the King to stand firm in order to reduce the danger of an insurrection and the risk that the Government of Israel might be tempted to intervene. The Chiefs of Staff were examining the means by which we could provide military assistance to Jordan; we had asked the Government of Israel to acquiesce in our over-flying Israeli territory in order to reinforce Jordan; and the forces allocated to this task

* Previously recorded in a Confidential Annex.

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were now ready to move from Cyprus to Amman within a few hours. Moreover, as soon as it became known in the Middle East that United States forces had landed in the Lebanon, the dissident elements in Jordan might seek to overthrow the Government. King Hussein should therefore be warned forthwith of the United States intervention in the Lebanon. He should also be informed of the terms in which he would best frame an appeal to the United States and ourselves for military assistance, since the form of appeal appropriate to circumstances in which the Government of Jordan apprehended a threat to the integrity of the country would need to be varied if the appeal was to be related to circumstances in which an insurrection had already broken out.

It was to our advantage that King Hussein, though now the Head of the Arab Union, had implied that, if he appealed for military assistance, he would do so only in respect of Jordan. It would not necessarily be wise that we should become involved in an indefinite commitment to restore the régime in Iraq. Nevertheless we must take such steps as were open to us to protect British lives and property in that country. It might not be feasible to reinforce the station at Habbaniya which, though occupied by some 900 technical personnel of the Royal Air Force and still in wireless communication with the United Kingdom, was being closely watched by the rebel forces. But we should warn the insurgents in Baghdad that we should hold them responsible for injury or damage suffered by British lives and property; and it was for consideration whether a statement in Parliament to this effect would suffice or whether we should use the good offices of a friendly Government to convey this message.

The Cabinet—

- (1) Invited the Attorney-General to consider the terms in which King Hussein of Jordan might be invited to make a formal appeal for military assistance from the United States Government and ourselves on the alternative hypotheses that:—
 - (i) the appeal would relate to circumstances in which the Government of Jordan apprehended a threat to the integrity of the country;
 - (ii) it would relate to circumstances in which an insurrection against the Government had actually broken out.
- (2) Invited the Foreign Secretary to consider further the most appropriate means of warning the insurgents in Baghdad that we should hold them responsible for any injury or damage sustained by British lives and property.
- (3) Agreed to resume their discussion at a subsequent meeting in the light of the expected reply from the United States Government about their attitude towards the request by King Hussein for an assurance that he could rely, if necessary, on military support from the United States and the United Kingdom.

*Cabinet Office, S.W. 1,
15th July, 1958.*