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58th Conclusions

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CABINET

*CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1,
on Wednesday, 16th July, 1958, at 11.30 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. 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. Sir REGINALD MANNING- HAM-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.
(Previous
Reference :
C.C. (58) 57th
Conclusions.)

*1. *The Prime Minister* reported to the Cabinet the reply which had been received from the United States Government to his request for an assurance that we could rely on their co-operation if it became necessary to send military assistance to King Hussein of Jordan. The United States Secretary of State was primarily concerned with the situation in Iraq and was doubtful whether intervention in Jordan would be wise until we had clarified its purpose and scope and were satisfied that its result would be to strengthen, rather than to weaken, the position of King Hussein. He would therefore welcome an opportunity to discuss these issues personally with the Foreign Secretary, in the hope that it would be possible to agree on the most appropriate course of action and to concert instructions for the joint planning, both military and political, of future policy in the Middle East. In the meantime, the United States Government had sent an interim reply to King Hussein, assuring him of their desire to help him to preserve the independence of his country.

The Chiefs of Staff had examined the feasibility of a United Kingdom intervention in Jordan and plans had now been completed for moving two battalion groups of the Parachute Brigade to Amman and for reinforcing them, if necessary, with the 1st Guards Brigade. Our legal right to deploy troops in Jordan in present circumstances could not be questioned. The force which we envisaged was not sufficient to infringe the Charter of the United Nations by constituting a threat to the integrity and independence of any third State, while the employment of British troops to assist the Government of Jordan to maintain internal law and order was a matter wholly within the domestic jurisdiction of that Government. But we must also recognise the possibility that, before the Government of Jordan could invite our assistance for this purpose, they might become the victims of aggression. It would be advisable therefore that their request for assistance should be based initially on the need to preserve law and order but should also be justified by reference to the imminence of a threat to the independence and integrity of Jordan. If this threat was not realised, our acceptance of the invitation would not be an infringement of international law, while, if an insurrection broke out in circumstances in which the Government of Jordan were entitled to use force in self-defence, we should be similarly entitled, under the Charter of the United Nations, to use force in assisting them.

In discussion there was general agreement that it would be useful if the Foreign Secretary and the United States Secretary of State could meet to discuss the issues which confronted the two Governments. This should be arranged as a matter of great urgency. It was uncertain how long the Government of Jordan could withstand the pressure to which they were subject; nor could it be assumed that the United States force which had landed in the Lebanon would necessarily remain there for any considerable length of time. If we were to ensure the participation of the United States Government in a comprehensive attempt to retrieve the situation in the Middle East, we should seek to agree with them, as rapidly as possible, a favourable reply to the request of King Hussein for an assurance that our two Governments would provide him with military assistance if he regarded the integrity and independence of Jordan as in danger.

Some doubts were expressed, however, about the legal ground of our intervention in Jordan. It was open to question how far it would be expedient to base our action on the entitlement of a Government to request the military assistance of a friendly country in order to maintain internal law and order. Public opinion would be liable to pay less consideration to the formal propriety of such a course than to the fact that, by apparent contrast with the action of the United States in the Lebanon, we should be intervening in the affairs of another country without the authority of the United Nations.

* Previously recorded in a Confidential Annex.

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Moreover an appeal for assistance based on the need to maintain law and order in Jordan was not likely to elicit so favourable a response from the United States Government as an appeal based on the right of self-defence against aggression. The General Assembly of the United Nations had adopted, in 1950, a resolution declaring that incitement to disaffection within the territory of another Power constituted an act of aggression; and although, in the absence of evidence about the extent of subversion in Jordan, it might be unwise to base our intervention solely on the need to assist the Government of Jordan in measures of self-defence, we must be prepared to justify it by reference to the indirect aggression which was undoubtedly being perpetrated against Jordan. The precise wording which King Hussein should be advised to employ if he found it necessary to appeal for assistance from the United States and ourselves would need to be examined further in the light of these considerations; and the Foreign Secretary should seek to agree with the United States Government a formula which, while preserving the legality of our action, would allow us the maximum freedom in selecting the ground of our intervention.

From the military point of view, intervention on the scale envisaged should be operationally feasible. The Government of Israel had not yet agreed to grant us permission to over-fly their territory; but they were unlikely to offer serious objection in present circumstances. Thereafter the proposed force should suffice to secure the limited objectives of holding the airfield at Amman, protecting King Hussein and his Government and possibly providing a bridgehead through which a more extensive operation could, if necessary, be mounted. On the other hand, the safety of the troops, who would be only lightly armed, would depend on local good will and co-operation. If they encountered opposition from the armoured units of the Jordanian Army it would be useless to despatch further infantry reinforcements; and, although it should be possible to arrange for their evacuation if necessary, this would be a grave blow to our prestige. It was very desirable, therefore, that the United States Government should agree to provide us with material support from the outset, particularly in the form of large troop-carrying aircraft and, if possible, heavier armaments and equipment. Until we knew how far they were prepared to commit themselves in this respect it would be unwise to give any firm or precise undertaking to King Hussein about the extent of the military assistance which we could give him.

The Prime Minister, summing up the discussion, said that the Foreign Secretary, accompanied by the Chief of the Defence Staff, should proceed forthwith to Washington for discussion with the United States Secretary of State. His objective should be to secure an undertaking from the United States Government that they would give us, in addition to political endorsement, the maximum of material support in providing military assistance to King Hussein and would also collaborate with us in planning a joint policy to retrieve the situation in the Middle East. Pending the outcome of these discussions, an interim message should be sent to King Hussein emphasising that the Foreign Secretary's visit to Washington was evidence of our desire to give him all practicable help.

The Cabinet—

- (1) Invited the Foreign Secretary, in the course of his forthcoming discussion with the United States Secretary of State, to be guided by the considerations indicated by the Prime Minister.
- (2) Invited the Foreign Secretary to arrange for King Hussein of Jordan to be informed that Her Majesty's Government hoped that, in the light of these discussions, they would be able to reply within the next 48 hours to his request for an assurance that the United Kingdom and the United

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States would provide him with military assistance to preserve the integrity and independence of Jordan if he appealed to them for that purpose.

- (3) Invited the Foreign Secretary, in consultation with the Attorney-General, to inform H.M. Ambassador at Amman of the terms in which King Hussein would most appropriately frame a request for such assistance should he find it necessary to do so before the forthcoming discussions between the Foreign Secretary and the United States Secretary of State were complete.

Cyprus.

(Previous Reference: C.C. (58) 48th Conclusions, Minute 2.)

*2. *The Colonial Secretary* said that the Greek terrorist organisation in Cyprus (EOKA) was known to be planning a further campaign of violence. The Governor of Cyprus had requested authority to make widespread arrests of suspected members of this organisation and, at the same time, to proscribe the Turkish terrorist organisation (T.N.T.) and to arrest a smaller number of Turkish Cypriots suspected of belonging to it. In principle it was right that Greek and Turkish terrorist organisations should receive impartial treatment; but it might be unwise, in view of the present situation in the Middle East, to take action which might alienate Turkish and Moslem sentiment or provoke further Turkish disorders in Cyprus at a time when the number of British troops available for internal security duties might have to be reduced.

In discussion it was suggested that it would nevertheless be prudent to attempt to forestall further disorders by arresting the suspected trouble-makers, especially since H.M. Ambassador at Ankara had advised that the Governor's proposal was unlikely to cause widespread resentment in Turkey. The Governor might be invited to reconsider the action which he had in mind; but, if he remained convinced of its necessity, the proposed arrest of the Turkish Cypriots, which did not depend on the proscription of T.N.T., should be carried out in addition to the arrest of the Greek Cypriot suspects. The proscription of T.N.T. might be more offensive to Turkish sentiment and should be deferred for the time being.

The Cabinet—

Agreed that the Colonial Secretary should have discretion, if he judged it necessary, to authorise the Governor of Cyprus to arrest suspected members of the Greek and Turkish terrorist organisations in Cyprus on the understanding that the proposed proscription of the Turkish organisation would be deferred for a time.

*Cabinet Office, S.W. 1,
16th July, 1958.*

* Previously recorded in a Confidential Annex.

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