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16 January 1956

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Dear Mr. Secretary,

I felt grateful for your letter of 23 December 1955 and appreciated your having written immediately after your return from Paris. My answer has been delayed by the knowledge that, crucial as was the loss of the intervening weeks, further progress on the issue of arms was blocked by the discussions of the Security Council.

With this chapter now drawing to its close, I must renew, with all the earnestness at my command, the urgent plea I repeatedly put forward to you in our conversations in Paris, Geneva and Washington for the supply of arms to Israel. The delivery of Soviet armaments to Egypt is, according to all reports, proceeding apace and the Egyptians are training in the use of the new weapons, of which they already possess substantial quantities. Unless something drastic is done without delay to offset this menacing Egyptian superiority, a position will very soon be created in which Colonel Nasser will be undisputed master of the situation, free to attack whenever he chooses. Our information does indeed point to his intention to launch an offensive with the object of annihilating the State of Israel as soon as he considers himself ready. His knowledge that Israel does not dispose of weapons equivalent in effectiveness to those which he has secured appears to play a decisive part in his military thinking. We cannot conceive that the United States Government should contemplate with equanimity the development of so ominous a crisis, with all its incalculable consequences.

In this situation, to suggest to us that arms alone will

The Honorable
John Foster Dulles
Secretary of State
Department of State
Washington, D.C.

not solve the problem is tantamount to telling a starving person that man does not live by bread alone. We are eager as ever to explore any possibility of a settlement, but we cannot pin all hopes on that extremely problematical chance whilst resigning ourselves to an imminent and mortal danger. Arms of the same quality as Egypt is now getting is our only anchor of safety - The only effective deterrent to Egyptian aggression.

I am authorised by my Government to state that, if given adequate arms, they will be used only for defensive purposes and that the avoidance of war and of any further deterioration in the stability of the area will be a primary consideration in our policy and action.

I earnestly trust that a sober appraisal of the peril confronting us will enable you to reach the conclusion that Israel's defensive position must and can be materially strengthened without further loss of time. That time is of the essence is something of a commonplace, but I can think of few circumstances in which it applies with greater force and validity than those in which we find ourselves today.

With warmest personal regards,

Very sincerely yours,

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