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UNITED NATIONS PALESTINE COMMISSION

Memorandum on Establishment of Armed Militia for  
the Jewish State Submitted by the Jewish Agency for Palestine

The attached letter and memorandum have been addressed to the Chairman by the Jewish Agency for Palestine and are hereby made available to the Members for their information.

16 East 66th Street  
New York 21, N.Y.

January 21, 1948

Chairman  
United Nations Palestine Commission  
Lake Success, N.Y.  
Sir:

1. The Jewish Agency for Palestine hereby requests that its representative be granted an opportunity of appearing before the United Nations Palestine Commission for the purpose of submitting views and proposals on matters of security and defence involved in the implementation of the General Assembly's [Resolution](#).
2. The points concerned are listed as subjects 1-9 in the enclosure to my letter to you of January 19, 1948.
3. A memorandum on the establishment of a Jewish Militia, in accordance with Part I, Section A, paragraph 8 of the General Assembly's [Resolution](#) of 29 November 1947, is hereby enclosed. The Jewish Agency wishes to draw special attention to its application in Paragraph 9 of that memorandum for facilities to obtain arms and equipment for the defence of the Jewish population and the organisation of the Jewish State militia.
4. The Jewish Agency wishes to draw urgent attention to the need of a general arms policy conducive to the implementation of the Assembly's [Resolution](#). Such a policy could be produced if the Security Council were to call upon Member States:
  - (a) to provide arms freely to authorised bodies co-operating with the U.N. Commission for the implementation of the Assembly's [Resolution](#);
  - (b) to withhold arms from those who might use them in an attempt "to alter by force the settlement envisaged by the Assembly's [Resolution](#)" on the grounds that any such attempt is "a threat to the peace, a breach of the peace or an act of aggression".

I am, Sir,  
Yours sincerely,

MS. Ag. M. Shertok  
enclosure

MEMORANDUM SUBMITTED BY THE JEWISH AGENCY FOR PALESTINE  
ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ARMED MILITIA FOR JEWISH STATE  
IN ACCORDANCE WITH [RESOLUTION](#) OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE  
UNITED NATIONS 29 November 1947

Introduction

1. The [Resolution](#) of the General Assembly (Part I, Section A, Paragraph 8) reads: -

"The Provisional Councils of Government of each State shall, within the shortest time possible, recruit an armed militia from the residents of that State, sufficient in number to maintain internal order and to prevent frontier clashes.

"The armed militia in each State shall, for operational purposes, be under the command of Jewish or Arab officers resident in that State, but general political and military control, including the choice of the militia's High Command, shall be exercised by the Commission."
2. According to Part I Section A Paragraph 12-13 of the General Assembly's [Resolution](#), the Mandatory Power will cease to be responsible for law and order after the termination of the Mandate except in areas not yet evacuated by its forces. In those areas, according to the British interpretation, British forces will be responsible "only for maintaining order with the limited object of ensuring that their final withdrawal is not impeded and that it should be completed in the shortest possible time."

In the course of the same statement the Secretary of State for the Colonies indicated 15 May 1948 as the probable date for the termination of the Mandate. It has been reported in London that the Mandate may even be terminated at an earlier date.

The facts are relevant in determining the time available for the formation of the Jewish militia.

#### The Time Factor

3. The General Assembly's [Resolution](#) makes no provision for armed forces other than the Jewish militia to defend the Jewish State and to maintain order within its frontiers. In all its representations before the appropriate Committees the Jewish Agency maintained that the use of an international force under the authority of the United Nations to implement the Assembly's [Resolution](#) would be highly desirable. If such a force were established the Jewish militia would co-operate with it in its tasks. But even in that event it is clear that the brunt of any fighting would fall on the Jewish militia. It is necessary therefore to plan for the contingency that the Jewish militia will have to be in a position to carry out onerous and responsible military duties within a period of four months from now. This militia is not yet in existence. There is abundant evidence that a determined effort will be made, in defiance of the United Nations [Resolution](#), to overrun the frontiers of the Jewish State and to disturb public order within it. The United Nations carries a grave moral responsibility for ensuring that the end of the Mandate does not find the inhabitants of the Jewish State inadequately defended against the aggression which has been openly threatened from many Arab quarters in and beyond Palestine. The Jewish Agency therefore submits that immediate steps to begin the recruitment, organization, and equipment of the Jewish militia are essential for the implementation of the General Assembly's [Resolution](#), and for the protection of the Jewish people. At present the existing Jewish security forces, inadequately equipped and not fully organized for regular security duties, are wholly and permanently absorbed in defending the Jewish population against persistent Arab attack.

4. Since the formation of the Jewish militia is entrusted to the Jewish Provisional Council of Government, the early constitution of that Provisional Council is essential if timely preparations are to be made. Should the formation of the Provisional Council be for any reason delayed, it is submitted that the Jewish Agency, which has been recognized by the United Nations as the authentic representative of the Jewish population and which had experience during the War in organising mass recruitment for the allied forces, should be authorised to carry out these functions.

The [Resolution](#) also allots certain functions to the United Nations Commission in the supervision of the militia. It follows that any delay in the arrival of the Commission in Palestine may involve a corresponding delay in the formation of an effective militia with serious consequences to the prospects of law and order in the area of the Jewish State, unless the Commission can make arrangements for the organisation of the militia to begin before the arrival of its own members in Palestine.

#### Objects of the Militia

5. The [Resolution](#) envisages a dual role for the Jewish militia -

- (a) the maintenance of internal order,
- (b) frontier control duties.

With regard to the maintenance of internal order, the Jewish militia must confront the presence of 320,000 Arabs in the Jewish State who have not yet become reconciled to the authority of the United Nations or the acceptance of its decisions. It is clear, moreover, that the danger to the Jewish State comes not only from the Arabs living in the Jewish area, but from the whole Arab population of the country; and the revolt will probably be encouraged and reinforced by the neighbouring Arab States as well. With regard to frontier control duties it must be noted that the boundaries of the Jewish State are tortuous and extended; that its territory is mainly situated in low-lying areas; and that at several points -- especially the "points of intersection" -- converging attacks from Arab territory can dislocate communications between the several parts of the Jewish State. These factors do not by any means rule out a successful defence plan. But they are highly relevant in any attempt to estimate the numerical strength, the state of equipment and the degree of mobility which the Jewish militia should attain.

#### Site of the Militia

6. In the light of these objects and of the prospective dangers to the integrity and security of the Jewish State, the Jewish Agency has sought to estimate the number of permanently mobilised effectives necessary to enable the militia to do its part in the implementation of the Assembly's [Resolution](#). The Jewish Agency submits that the Jewish militia should consist of 30,000 - 35,000 men. This does not include civil police forces who are a responsibility of administrative departments.

#### Organisation of Formations

7. The duties which the militia will have to perform do not lend themselves to Divisional organisation. The Jewish territory for defensive purposes falls naturally into four sections (Eastern Galilee, Haifa Area, Central Coastal Plain Area and Negev). It is therefore proposed that the militia should be composed of five Brigade Groups, each made up of some 6,000 - 7,000 troops of which four are to be in the field in reserve. Each Brigade Group will be a self-contained formation commanding its own specialised technical and medical units. The establishment of a Brigade Group is outlined in Appendix A.

#### Command

8. The duties of "general political and military control" allotted by the [Resolution](#) to the U.N. Commission involve close liaison between the military advisers of the Commission and the General Staff of the militia. The operational command of formations and units would be entirely the responsibility of Jewish commanders.

#### Recruitment

9. It is not anticipated that the Jewish Agency or the Jewish Provisional Council of Government will find difficulty in recruiting 30,000 volunteers. It will be recalled that during World War II the Jewish Community of Palestine mobilised 26,000 recruits for active service with the Allied forces under British command and 7,000 for local defence. These forces, recruited mainly through the initiative and organisation of the Jewish Agency and Vaad Leumi, included infantry, engineers, transport troops, artillery, medical units and naval personnel. They also included some thousands of Palestinian Jews in the Royal Air Force employed both in flying operations and in ground duties. Moreover, the Jewish civilian population has established and is now maintaining a system of voluntary defence activity in settlements and towns during all times of emergency. This movement of volunteer defence known as HAGANA contains the manpower elements on which the Jewish militia can be based.

10. The present emergency does not allow a gradual development of the Jewish militia from small beginnings to its full strength. The danger to the Jewish State will be greatest in its earliest days and will diminish as its own existence and stability begins to command the acquiescence of its neighbours. It is thus essential that the Jewish militia be in a state of full mobilisation and equipment as soon as it assumes responsibility for defence -- i.e. immediately after the Mandate is terminated. The figures outlined here for manpower and equipment are therefore immediate requirements, and not eventual targets.

#### Training

11. The process of training, as well as of enlistment, must begin well in advance of the date when the Mandate terminates. Much of the personnel which already has some military training is now fully absorbed in warding off Arab attack, so that a thorough training programme must be initiated of recruits.

#### Military advisors

12. It is urgently necessary for the U.N. Commission to facilitate the appointment of experienced and competent military experts to assist the formation, planning and training of the Jewish militia.

#### Co-ordination with Mandatory Power

13. After the termination of the Mandate the Jewish militia acting under the U.N. Commission, will become responsible for law and order in areas evacuated by the British forces. It is not yet clear whether The British withdrawal will be progressive or whether it will be accomplished at one or two quick stages. The regional and central evolution of the militia depends on due prior knowledge of the Mandatory's evacuation plan. Assumption of responsibility for law and order in any area requires previous survey and preparation. The U.N. Commission can fulfil a vital role in ensuring that the normal process of transfer takes place between local British units and units of the Jewish militia. It is important that when it begins to operate the militia is in occupation of points granting control of some water, fuel, and electricity supplies.

14. It is therefore essential to make immediate arrangements with the Mandatory Power enabling the militia to be equipped, enlisted and trained during the transition

period in preparation for its eventual responsibility. The present anomalous situation in which Jewish preparations to carry out an essential part of the Assembly's [Resolution](#) are exposed to legal and police attack should be corrected as soon as possible. In anticipating that the Mandatory will respond to this necessity, the Jewish Agency bases itself on the declaration of the United Kingdom representative in the General Assembly on 26 November 1947 in which he pledged his Government to "loyal acceptance" of the Assembly's [Resolution](#).<sup>2</sup> In the Ad Hoc Committee of the General Assembly, Sir Alexander Cadogan declared that the Mandatory Power would not obstruct the efforts of the U.N. Commission to establish militias under the terms of the Assembly's [Resolution](#).

#### Equipment

15. The most serious difficulty confronting the Jews of Palestine in the task of forming their militia as in their present defence duties is in the acquisition of arms and military stores. The arms and equipment now at their disposal are inadequate in relation to the tasks which the militia will have to perform. The characteristic features of Palestine Jewry's military potential today is a disparity between its manpower resources and its resources of arms and equipment. The disparity arose through certain anomalies in the history of the Mandate. The only community in the Near East seriously and immediately threatened by aggression is the only community in the Near East which has not been able to make adequate legal provision for its own defence. The opponents of the United Nations decision are able to acquire arms freely -- sometimes from surprising sources.<sup>3</sup> The defenders of that decision will have no such facility until the U.N. Commission intervenes.

16. The needs of the militia of 30,000-35,000 in terms of arms are estimated in Appendix B and the Jewish Agency begs hereby to apply to the Commission for assistance in procuring these arms and equipment.

17. Special attention must be drawn to the need for aircraft. Some of the States which have threatened to take violent action against the Jewish State have bomber aircraft. It is therefore necessary for the Jewish militia to have fighter support. Moreover, the nature of the Jewish frontiers and the need for quick reconnaissance lend incalculable importance to the air arm in the prevention of and defence against attacks on land as well as in ensuring essential supplies to isolated localities. In recent weeks a formidable Arab attack on Jewish villages in the Negev was frustrated through the observation and action of a single-engined Jewish aircraft flying on a medical mission. The incursion of Arabs across the Syrian frontier to Dan was also repelled with little loss on either side through the action of British fighter planes. The Jewish Agency submits that the possession of several squadrons of aircraft by a Jewish militia can transform the prospects of successful defence. (See Appendix B).

#### Acquisition of Arms

18. The need of the Jewish militia to acquire arms may require action by the U.N. Commission in the Security Council -- and representations by the Security Council to Member States. It is anomalous that embargoes should apply indiscriminately to the defenders and the opponents of a United Nations policy; it is still more anomalous that for reasons of status there are legal ways for Arabs to obtain arms to cause a breach of the peace and not for the Jews to prevent the breach. The Assembly's [Resolution](#) defines "any attempt to alter by force the settlement envisaged by this [resolution](#)", as "a threat to the peace, a breach of the peace or an act of aggression".

#### Unused British Arms

19. Apart from obtaining facilities for purchase in various States, it is submitted that the U.N. Commission should negotiate an agreement for the use of relinquished British arms in the maintenance of order under the Commission's control. In his speech in the House of Commons on 11 December 1947 Mr. Creech-Jones indicated that the Mandatory might not be able to remove all war-like stores; and there have been reports of an intention to destroy all stores which cannot be removed.

20. It should be realized that equipment of the Palestine Police (including 150 armoured cars or Bren carriers, 500 light Machine Guns, and several thousand rifles) is the property of the taxpayers of Palestine and not of the United Kingdom Government. On these grounds it is proper that the equipment of the Palestine Police should fall to the successor authority, which is the U.N. Commission, for use in the maintenance of law and order through the militias subordinate to it. Part of these stores should be distributed to the Jewish militia and the rest held for the Arab militia when it is constituted and ready to implement the Assembly's [resolution](#). A similar policy should be applied to the Transjordan Frontier Force's equipment. If this force is disbanded, its arms should not be allowed to be disposed of indiscriminately without U.N. Commission's control. At present travellers on the Jaffa-Jerusalem and other highways are being murdered daily through insufficient patrolling and escorting by armoured cars. To destroy this protective equipment in the condition of Palestine today would be equivalent to destroying food in an area of hunger.

21. Barracks, camps and other installations in the Jewish area should, when evacuated by British forces, be made available to the U.N. Commission for use by the Jewish militia. There are large camps in the Negev, near Hatenya and around Haifa.

#### Financial Assistance

22. The financial burden involved in the formation of a militia is of dimensions which can only be attained with the help of State powers and State resources. Jewish resources are already more than fully taxed by the current needs of immediate defence. It is estimated that the cost of maintaining the militia, as outlined here, during the transition period will be 50 million dollars. Of this 24 millions are accounted for in maintenance and subsistence and 26 millions in purchase of arm and equipment. (See Appendix B). The U.N. Commission can assist in the solution of this problem through a variety of alternative arrangements:-

- (a) Obtaining free supplies on a Security Council recommendation.
- (b) Obtaining and distributing relinquished British arms.
- (c) Securing financial contributions from Member States for implementation of a U.N. policy.
- (d) Procurement of loan facilities to be repayed on account of the future Jewish Government.

#### Security in Jerusalem

23. The Jewish Agency draws special attention to the intolerable situation which exists with regard to the security of Jerusalem. At present the Mandatory Power is visibly failing in the grave responsibility which it holds towards Palestine and the civilised world for the prevention of disorder in the Holy City. The Old City is in a state of siege. Arab gangs have their base of operations in the very cradle of the world's religions. With the apparent acquiescence of the British forces they control entrance and exit at the Jaffa Gate. Free access to Jerusalem is denied through an organised system of Arab ambush and sniping and in the City itself the Jewish Holy Places are walled off from the Jewish worshippers. It is inconceivable that the conscience of mankind can allow any authority responsible for law and order in the future International City to remain passive while this situation endures or deteriorates.

The General Assembly's [resolution](#) requires the formation of "a special police force of adequate strength members of which shall be recruited outside of Palestine". The measures taken for the formation of the Jewish militia therefore do not cover the needs of security in Jerusalem where it is urgently necessary to commence the preparation of the special police force. In its representations on Part III of the General Assembly's [Resolution](#) the Jewish Agency will submit its views on the constitution of this force.

#### Conclusion

25. Proposals outlined here would be subject to modification if plans for an international force were to materialize. But as long as the Jewish militia is the only instrument available for implementation, the Jewish Agency feels bound to emphasise the grave political and moral implications of any delay in its formation or any deficiency in its equipment. The Jews of Palestine are prepared, if they must, to assume by themselves the whole burden of implementing the Assembly's verdict in the Jewish area; but if they are to fulfil that task they must have all the facilities, the means, the tools, and the moral support which the United Nations can bestow.

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#### APPENDIX A

#### ORGANISATION AND ESTABLISHMENT OF JEWISH MILITIA Militia HQ with HQ Groups

Bde Group (Galilee)	Bde Group (Haifa Area)	Bde Group (Coastal Plain Tel Aviv)	Bde Group Negev	Mech Bde Group (Reserve)
	<u>Brigade Group organisation</u>			
	3 infantry Battalions		3000	
	1 motorised Battalion		1000	
	1 Artillery Unit (2 Field Batteries, 2 Light A/A Batteries)		400	
	1 Field Engineering Company		200	
	1 Supply Company		150	
	1 Workshop Company		120	
	1 Signal Unit		80	
	1 Medical Unit		200	
	1 Provost Unit		40	
	1 Defence Platoon		40	
	1 Tank Squadron (15 tanks)		100	
	1 EQ Copany		100	
	1 Reconnaissance Squadron		120	
	2 Reconnaissance Air Flights		<u>20</u>	
			5570	Plus reinforcements and depot troops.

#### Reserve Brigade Group

Same personnel establishment as Brigade Group, 2 Bns. to be mechanized. Equipment to contain heavier armament with more MGs and 3" mortars. Stronger Artillery and Tank support.

#### Establishment of Air Component

2 Fighter Squadrons  
1 Recce Group  
2 Transport Groups  
1 Training Group  
2 Air Liaison Sections

#### Note of HQ Troops

Object is to guard HQ and installations.

Includes base depots, training centre and workshop, depot personnel.

## APPENDIX B

### ARMS AND EQUIPMENT OF JEWISH MILITIA

I.	<u>Small Arms</u>	<u>Number Required</u>
	Service Rifles	30,000
	Sniper Rifles	500
	LMG	1,500
	MMG	200
II.	<u>Infantry Support Weapons</u>	
	3" mortars	250
	4.2" mortars	80
	Bazooka	300
III.	<u>Artillery</u>	
	105 mm Gunhos	20
	75 MTN How	60
	155 mm MED How	10
	40 mm Before	60
	57 mm ET	120
IV.	<u>Transport</u>	
	Jeeps	500
	Dodge 3/4 Ton	600
	White Half Track	150
	3-ton lorry or 2-ton trucks	500
	Trailer Jeep	250
V.	<u>Armoured</u>	
	Carriere	300
	Scoutan	40

VI.	Armoured cars	150
	Recce Cars	50
	Tanks (varous types)	75 (30 light, 45 medium)
	Equipment	
	Engineer Equipment -- Mines, mine-detectors, tools.	
	Signal Equipment -- Wireless, Radio (1500 pieces)	
	Medical Equipment -- for 100 ambulances.	
	Personnel Equipment -- Uniforms, benches, tables, lamps, etc.	
	<u>Ammunition -- Rounds per weapon:-</u>	
	1,000 per rifle	
	10,000 per LMG	
	20,000 per MMG	
	2,000 per Fun Aray.	

[MISSED TEXT].(to cover capital outlay and maintenance to [missed word] of transition period)

[MISSED]	5-1/2 million dollars
[MISSED]	2-1/3 million dollars
Artillery [MISSED]	10 million dollars
Transport (including armour and tanks)	3 million dollars
[MISSED]	2 million dollars
[MISSED]	2 million dollars
[MISSED]	1 million dollars

Total -- 26 million dollars

Maintenance for seven months until end of transition period

(Water 120 [MISSED] per man]

[MISSED]

[Document in PDF format](#)