

COPY OF LETTER

UK 4

UNITED KINGDOM DELEGATION TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
Empire State Building  
New York 1, New York

29th January, 1948.

Dear Bunche,

You will remember that at our meeting with the Commission on Wednesday, 21st January, I undertook to make some enquiries from the Government of Palestine on various security matters. I attach a note setting out answers to the various points raised and hope this will be of some use.

Yours ever

John Fletcher-Cooke (signed)

P.S. You will see that the number of rifles taken (referred to in Section I(a) has been left blank. This number was corrupted in transmission and I am asking for a repeat from Jerusalem and will let you have the figure as soon as possible.

John (signed)

Dr. Ralph J. Bunche,  
Principal Secretary to the United Nations  
Commission on Palestine,  
United Nations,  
Lake Success,  
New York.

NOTE ON CERTAIN SECURITY POINTS ARISING OUT OF DISCUSSION

WITH THE COMMISSION ON WEDNESDAY, 21 January

The following information has now been received from the Government of Palestine in reply to certain questions put to the United Kingdom Delegation by members of the Commission on 21st January:

I. DESERTIONS FROM THE PALESTINE POLICE FORCE

(a) 372 Arabs of whom 2 are regular Police, 210 temporary additional police, 152 supernumerary Police employed by H.M. Forces, 8 supernumerary police privately employed have deserted since 29th November 1947. These deserters took with them rifles, 3 Bren guns, 1 Thompson sub-machine gun, 19 grenades, 5 revolvers, 5 Verrey pistols, 104 Verrey cartridges, and 12,502 rounds of ammunition.

(b) No Jews have deserted from the Palestine Police Force.

II. DESERTIONS FROM THE TRANSJORDAN FRONTIER FORCE

70 men are reported to have deserted from the Trans-Jordan Frontier Force since 29th November, 1947, taking with them 67 rifles, 38 automatic weapons and 3 pistols.

III. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PALESTINE POLICE FORCE AND CERTAIN OTHER BODIES

(a) Mishmar

This body, which was raised by the Jewish Agency with the approval of the Government of Palestine, operates only in the Tel Aviv-Ramatgan-Petah Tikvah area from which British and Arab Police have been withdrawn. Permission to raise this force was granted on the express understanding that it was to be used for maintaining law and order within, and preventing breaches of the peace by members of, the Jewish community and in particular the dissident groups. Mishmar is required to keep in touch with the regular Jewish Police who remain in the area and who continue to function in the normal way as a part of the Palestine Police Force under the Inspector-General of Police.

(b) Arab Municipal Police

The forces are being raised in purely Arab areas on the basis of 50%

/temporary

temporary additional constables and 50 per cent special constables provided by the Municipalities and Local Councils concerned. They operate under the direct control of the regular police formations in their respective Police Districts and are being formed with the object of assisting the regular police in maintaining law and order now and of remaining after the termination of the Mandate as an organisation capable of enforcing order and if necessary of defending towns and villages against attack.

(c) Hagana

The Hagana is an organisation of the Jewish Agency which is not legally recognised. Unarmed members, however, who perform watch and ward duties in Jewish areas are permitted to function on the basis that it is an elementary right of citizens to protect themselves. Where any private organisation, including the Hagana, takes offensive action or where its members are found in possession of unlicensed firearms, they are of course dealt with in accordance with the law. To co-ordinate watch and ward duties carried out by unarmed Jewish citizens, certain persons who are known to be members of the Hagana have been recognised and these for want of a better term are known as liaison officers. Similarly on the Arab side, contact is maintained with members or representatives of Arab National Committees.

III. ORGANISATION OF (a) MISHMAR and (b) ARAB MUNICIPAL POLICE

(a) Mishmar

The details of the organisation of Mishmar have been left to the Jewish Agency provided that the overriding principle is maintained that they work in close co-operation with the local Jewish regular police. Mishmar numbers not more than 500 and is entirely paid by the Jewish Agency who are also responsible for finding the arms. Government's part in this arrangement is limited to the issue of firearm licences up to an approved limit and valid only within the Mishmar area.

(b) Arab Municipal Police

These Police Forces are still in the early stages of formation and accurate figures of their strengths cannot be given at present. In Jaffa, 300 men have been enrolled and in Jerusalem it is proposed to enroll

300 Arabs and 300 Jews. Elsewhere, the Government principle is that the personnel of these forces should not exceed 100 in the larger towns such as Nablus, Hebron and Gaza and 50 in such places as Tulkarm, Beisan and Jenin. Enrollment of special constables for protection of villages on a voluntary unpaid basis is contemplated at a later stage. Municipal Forces are made up as to one half by temporary additional constables paid by Government and as to the other half by special constables paid by the Municipality or Local Council concerned. Similarly, arms are provided by Government for half of each force, the balance being found by the Municipality or Local Council.

#### IV. REFERENCE TO SHRAPNEL WOUNDS

In the majority of cases shrapnel wounds have been caused by various types of bombs or grenades. It is known, however, that the Jews have a considerable number of mortars and their use has been verified on three different occasions during the month of January. Unexploded two-inch mortar bombs were found by security forces in Jewish houses or areas in Jerusalem on 3rd and 11th January and in Jaffa-Tel Aviv on 21st January. There is no reason to suppose that the Jews have any heavier armaments though the possibility of the further use of barrel bombs such as that which wrecked Police Headquarters at Haifa cannot be excluded. It is suspected that the Arabs may have a limited number of French mortars.

#### V. USE OF AIRCRAFT

Jewish planes have been used to drop messages and supplies to outlying settlements but there is no reason to suppose at present that these aircraft are armed.

(Signed) J. FLETCHER-COOK

30 January 1948