

SECRETTHE PALESTINE SITUATION

(Summary of conclusions reached by representatives of
CIA, State, War, and Navy in conference 5 May 1948)

I. British in Palestine

The UK will give up the mandate 15 May, at which time there will be no more than 20,000 British troops (and possibly less than 15,000) in the country, all of whom will be concentrated in the Haifa area. Until 15 May there will be British troops in Jerusalem, Jaffa, and Haifa, and patrols on the Jerusalem-Jaffa and Jerusalem-Ramallah roads. Until 15 May, their troops will strongly oppose Arab-Jewish hostilities in the built up areas specified. If outside Arab armies invade Palestine before 15 May, which is highly unlikely, the British may attempt to oppose them, although such action becomes increasingly unlikely as 15 May approaches. After 15 May, the British troops remaining in the Haifa enclave will ensure security for their orderly withdrawal. They will in no way interfere in Arab-Jewish hostilities outside the Haifa area.

II. Arab forces in Palestine

There are about 15,000 Arab guerrillas now in the country, concentrated in the Nablus area, with smaller groups south of Jerusalem and in western Galilee. The morale of these irregulars is low, and they are not expected to engage in much activity until they have been stiffened with regular officers and trained soldiers from the Arab armies. Under trained leadership these irregulars could be extremely effective, provided they stick to "tip and run" attacks on isolated Jewish settlements and communications. They can never expect to match the Jews in full-scale battles for specific points. If, as expected, the Palestine strife develops into a long guerrilla war, the Arab

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irregulars will probably bear the brunt of the fighting. Their leaders will probably improve and they will become more effective as time goes on.

III. Arab armies outside Palestine

The armies of the Arab states will not invade Palestine before 15 May, unless the Jews launch further full-scale attacks on Jerusalem or Jaffa. After 15 May, the Transjordan Arab Legion and token units from the Syrian, Lebanese, Iraqi, and Egyptian armies will enter Palestine and occupy the Arab areas of the country. They will probably try to avoid major battles with the Hagana, but important engagements will take place, most likely in Eastern Galilee, around Jerusalem, and on the Jerusalem-Tel-Aviv road. The following table estimates the strengths of the Arab States' Armies, the number of troops that each state will probably contribute for the Palestine war, and where in Palestine they will go:

<u>State</u>	<u>Total Army</u>	<u>To Palestine</u>	<u>Area</u>
Lebanon	3,600	1,000	Western Galilee
Syria	10,000	3,000	Eastern Galilee
Iraq	31,000	2,000	Samaria and Jerusalem areas
Transjordan	10,000	8,000	
Saudi Arabia	8,000	—	—
Egypt	50,000	4,000	Negev
Totals	<u>112,600</u>	<u>18,000</u>	

The Arab Legion troops now in Palestine (about 3,000) will probably not return to Transjordan before 15 May. They will stay on and be reinforced.

IV. Arab political factors

Abdullah will play the leading part in the Arab invasion of Palestine. However, he will not be in a position to ignore the Arab League if a political solution of the Palestine issue is contemplated. If Abdullah attempted to

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annex the Arab portions of Palestine to Transjordan, while at the same time acquiescing in the formation of an independent Jewish state, he would be opposed by all the Arab states and would run the risk of being assassinated as a traitor to the Arab cause.

Ibn Saud appears to be holding back at present, but can be expected to influence decisively any final political solution for Palestine.

V. Jewish forces in Palestine

In addition to a striking force of 15,000, the Jews have 20,000 full time members of Hagana. Another 50,000 are being used for part-time defense duties, 20,000 of whom could be put on a full-time basis at short notice. The remaining 20,000 Jews on Cyprus are reported to be men of military age and will prove a valuable manpower reinforcement when they reach Haifa, as expected, shortly after 15 May.

Information on Jewish troop disposition is scanty. They are concentrated in strength in the coastal areas and in Jerusalem. Jewish settlements and towns in the Eastern Galilee area are known to have been reinforced recently with groups of 300-600 men. However, the total number of Jewish troops in the outlying areas and on the communication routes is unknown. The greatest weakness of the Jewish forces may be in concentrating a large number of troops in one place at one time. The greatest Jewish concentration to date has been of 2,000 men.

The 2,500 Jews in the Negev will almost certainly be withdrawn to the coastal area if the Arabs make a determined effort to cut Negev off. The Jews will probably also have to abandon the Galilee area within six months.

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They may attempt to take over all of Jerusalem, but it seems more likely (and certainly wiser) for them to accept international control of the area and concentrate on keeping open communications between Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv.

VI. Jewish political factors

The Jews will almost certainly proclaim an independent state on 16 May and thereafter solicit recognition from all and sundry. They will not retreat from full independence unless economic and military pressures against them become too great and recognition is not forthcoming. They will have complete control of immigration; and, barring UN sanctions, will be able to import war materiel freely.

VII. International factors

Jerusalem will probably come under some kind of international regime.

On the question of recognition of the Jewish state, the US, UK, and probably a majority of the UN would prefer to keep it an international problem. Some states, probably including the USSR, may act unilaterally outside the UN on the basis of the partition recommendation of 29 November 1947. Both the US and UK would probably continue to back a UN arms embargo of both Arabs and Jews.

US relations with the Arab states are not yet too badly compromised. However, if the US is forced by public pressure to recognize the Jewish state, the latter will in effect become a US protectorate. In such an eventuality, the US might be compelled to assist the Jews against the Arabs, and US strategic interests in the Near East would be irretrievably damaged.

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VIII. Future military developments

Unless the Jewish state in Palestine gets full diplomatic and military support from one of the great powers, it will probably be unable to maintain itself against the Arabs for more than two years. The Jews have the initial military advantage, but provided the Arabs keep to guerrilla tactics and avoid major military engagements, the Jews will be slowly worn down, their economic life disrupted, and without substantial outside recognition their morale weakened. It is unlikely that the Jews would attack into Arab territory, except in an attempt to destroy Arab armed concentrations. They are unlikely to attempt to hold large Arab areas, for there would be little military or economic advantage in so doing. Since they cannot dominate the entire Arab world, they must be content to cling to their narrow strip of territory in Palestine, maintain a continuous defense against Arab attacks, and hope that eventually the Arabs will tire of the sport and leave them in peace. It is extremely unlikely, however, that the Arabs will ever accept a Zionist state on their doorsteps. Thus, unless outside international factors complete submerge this purely Arab-Zionist situation (and it is highly probable that they will), the Palestine war will continue until the Jews either dominate the Arab world or accept minority status within it. There is an outside chance that the Arabs might eventually be willing to allow the Jews a token state in Palestine around Tel-Aviv. The best solution, and one which the Jews might eventually be willing to accept, would be a bi-national state.

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