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CABLEGRAM DATED 13 MARCH 1949 FROM THE ACTING MEDIATOR FOR PALESTINE TO  
THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL CONCERNING ALLEGED MILITARY  
OPERATIONS BY ISRAELI FORCES IN THE SOUTHERN NEGEV

I have the honour to report to the Security Council further information concerning military activities in the Southern Negev as first reported in S/1285. United Nations observers are in the field and are making on the spot investigations, but owing to poor transportation and communications facilities in this area I do not yet have available to me their detailed reports and cannot, therefore, submit to the Council a definite report on the matter at this time.

It is reported by a United Nations observer, whose source of information was principally the Arab Legion at Aqaba, that Israeli forces occupied Umm Reshresh, within the borders of Palestine on the Gulf of Aqaba in the afternoon of 10 March with two jeeps and one large personnel carrier. Three hours later, on the same day, fourteen additional Israeli vehicles had arrived there. The strength of the Israeli garrison thus established at Umm Reshresh was on that date estimated at 150 men and 25 vehicles. There is as yet no verification of a report that the Israeli forces advanced to Umm Reshresh via a road in Egyptian territory running from Jerasa Kuntilla (MR 119340) to Basen (MR 136890).

The occupation of Umm Reshresh is officially verified by competent Israeli sources.

On 10 March also, the observer saw two liaison type Israeli aircraft flying in the vicinity of the Palestine Transjordan border at MR 155920, southeast of the police post at Ein El Chidyen.

On the morning of 11 March an Israeli column of six jeeps and ten heavy vehicles was observed moving north from Umm Reshresh up the Wadi Araba.

The observer also reports numerous refugees moving from the Palestine area across the border into the town of Aqaba.

The only incident of fighting thus far reported involved an exchange of fire between Arab legion and Israeli elements in the vicinity of Gharm prior to the signing of the cease-fire on 11 March. In this brief engagement one Arab legion armoured car was disabled. Israeli authorities have informed me that this incident occurred on the Palestine side of the Transjordan frontier

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I have formally requested both Israeli and Transjordan delegations now at Rhodes to inform their governments that military activity of this kind, regardless of whether actual fighting eventuates, must be regarded as contrary to the conditions of the truce imposed by the Security Council.

My final report on this incident will be promptly submitted.

Ralph Bunche  
Acting Mediator

