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REPORT BY THE ACTING CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE UNITED NATIONS TRUCE
SUPERVISION ORGANIZATION IN PALESTINE, COLONEL B.V. LEARY, DATED
23 SEPTEMBER 1957, RELATING TO THE AREA BETWEEN THE LINES
(NEUTRAL ZONE) AROUND GOVERNMENT HOUSE AREA

Note by the Secretary-General: The Secretary-General has the honour to circulate, for the information of members of the Security Council, the following report dated 23 September 1957, from the Acting Chief of Staff of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in Palestine, relating to the area between the lines (neutral zone) around the Government House area.

Jerusalem, 23 September 1957

1. In compliance with the wishes expressed by the members at the 787th and 788th meetings of the Security Council on 6 September 1957, I have the honour to submit the following report on "the area between the lines" (Neutral Zone, hereinafter referred to as the "Zone") around the Government House area (See annex A).

I

2. On 21 July 1957, Israeli workmen commenced to stake out part of the Zone up to what Israel considers to be a de facto civilian line separating the civilian activities of both Parties. (See annexes B and C. Annex B shows situation on 20 July 1957 and annex C the progress of work up to 10 September 1957.). Later, earthmoving and cultivating equipment were used by these labourers to cut roads and plough the land.^{1/} This work has continued without interruption since 21 July 1957 and is still progressing. The declared purpose of this work is to prepare the land for afforestation as part of a beautification project. The Jordanian authorities immediately filed complaints with the Mixed Armistice Commission and the Acting Chief of Staff alleging that the work in progress

^{1/} Fifty to sixty olive trees have been uprooted by the Israeli workmen around MR 17185 12815; the ownership of these trees could only be ascertained by search of titles and deeds (See para. 7(d)).

violated the General Armistice Agreement and requested that the work be stopped (See annex I).

II

3. As has already been explained to the members of the Security Council by the Parties, the Zone had its origin in the Neutral Zone established by the International Red Cross in 1947-1948. Upon the termination of the British Mandate in Palestine, an area comprising Government House, Arab College and the Jewish Agricultural School was placed under the protection of the International Red Cross pursuant to agreements signed by this humanitarian organization with the Arab and Jewish authorities on 9 May and 17 May 1948 respectively. On 27 August 1948, the Central Truce Supervision Board directed that a Neutral Zone be created around the above-mentioned Red Cross area and that all military personnel except United Nations Military Observers should be withdrawn and all military equipment and installations removed (see annex D). This Neutral Zone was incorporated with minor changes into the cease-fire line signed on 30 November 1948. The Israel-Jordan General Armistice Agreement of 3 April 1949 left the Zone intact (article V, paragraph 1 (b), of the General Armistice Agreement stipulates that in the Jerusalem sector the Armistice Demarcation Line shall correspond to the lines defined in the 30 November 1948 cease-fire agreement). An unsuccessful attempt was made in 1949 to agree on a single demarcation line and to abolish the Zone.

III

4. At the 9th Mixed Armistice Commission meeting held on 12 June 1949, it was decided that the armed forces of both Parties which were stationed in the Zone be withdrawn to their respective armistice lines. The demilitarized character of the Zone originally established by the Central Truce Supervision Board was thus reaffirmed. Complaints of infringements upon the demilitarized character were dealt with first by the Mixed Armistice Commission; later also by the Chief of Staff, specifically in 1955 and again in September 1956 when Major-General E.L.M. Burns ordered an inspection of the whole area by United Nations Military Observers and drew the attention of both Parties to various

military infringements in the Zone which had been revealed by the investigation (see annexes E and F). Further inspections were carried out on 15 July, 2 and 3 August 1957. The results of the inspections of 2 and 3 August are contained in annex G.

5. The demilitarized character of the Zone was violated during the initial stages of Israel's afforestation project. In particular, Jordanian troops were seen in the Zone, trenches and positions were renovated. During the same period, no Israel military personnel were observed in the Zone with the exception of several Israel Army officers who inspected the area on two occasions. Israel border police up to approximately fifteen men were in the Zone with the stated purpose of providing protection to the labourers; United Nations Military Observers noted that the police were armed with rifles and submachineguns. There has been a continual violation of the demilitarized status of the Zone by Jordan through the use for military traffic of the Jerusalem-Bethlehem-Hebron highway which enters the Zone in two places.

IV

6. As has been shown above, UNTSO considers itself competent to exercise surveillance over the Zone in order to maintain its demilitarized status. UNTSO does not, however, possess any specific authority or terms of reference with respect to the civilian activities in this area. General Riley, first Chief of Staff of UNTSO, made the following statement at the 9th Mixed Armistice Commission meeting on 12 June 1949:

"I realize full well that the question of withdrawal of military forces from this area is not a solution of the problem. I am keenly interested in this area as I was involved initially in setting up the demilitarized area around Government House and grounds which is now part of the area between the demarcation lines as set forth in the Armistice Agreement. Initially, or during the period of the truce, it was possible for the Truce Supervision Organization to control the civilian situation within this area. Upon the signing of the Armistice Agreement between the two States, the Truce Supervision control was withdrawn. We still have civilians in this area. I consider that it is essential that some corrective action be taken in this regard."

In this connexion, it might be pointed out that the same year a Jordanian delegate suggested that this Zone be placed under United Nations control. This suggestion was, however, not further discussed.

7. In view of the absence of any provisions in the General Armistice Agreement regarding the status of the Zone and the lack of any terms of reference, UNTSO cannot express any authoritative opinion as to the merits of the arguments advanced by the respective Parties in the present dispute. It is evident from a reading of the records that the civilian matters of the Zone have been left regrettably vague for many years. A review of the records would furthermore appear to indicate that although some arguments advanced by the Parties have merit and should be given due consideration, other arguments do not appear to be fully supported. For instance:

(a) One difficulty arises with respect to the status quo which Jordan claims has been violated. Various changes have occurred in the Zone since the signing of the Armistice Agreement on 3 April 1949. Israel has progressively extended her cultivation (see map, annex B-^{2/}). Jordan on her part has completed a paved two-lane highway in 1952-1953 linking Jerusalem to Bethlehem and Hebron which cuts through the Neutral Zone at two places, houses have been converted into a school and a police station, a restaurant has been built in 1952-1953 on the highway.^{3/}

(b) The UNTSO fact-finding investigation has not found any agreement to the effect that civilians living outside the Zone at the signing of the Armistice Agreement would not be permitted to enter the area, or that the civilians residing in the Zone should restrict their activities to their own property. In this connexion, it should be pointed out that the only known agreement reached by the Parties in regard to civilian activities (on 12 June 1949) was to call the Zone "area between the lines" and render article IV, 3 of the General Armistice Agreement inoperative for this Zone.^{4/} As a matter of fact, civilians of both Parties have crossed into the area freely and at no time after the Zone had been declared an "area between the lines" was such a crossing considered a violation of the General Armistice Agreement.

^{2/} Jordan has protested against the extensions of 1955 and 1956.

^{3/} School is attended by children living outside the Zone. The restaurant is open to the general public.

^{4/} A draft agreement which was extensively discussed but never signed by the Parties is reproduced as annex H. This draft is of interest as it reflects the thinking of the Parties in June 1949.

(c) With respect to the existence of a civilian line, the Parties have expressed over the years conflicting views and delegates of both Parties have at various times either confirmed or denied the existence of such a civilian line. It is a fact that both Jordanian and Israeli civilians have inhabited the Zone continuously since the signing of the Armistice Agreement and they have remained apart. This would to some extent support the view that there has existed some kind of a division line. This is the more so as in no place in the early records was it found that agreement had been reached on the creation of a buffer zone or on limiting the Jewish civilians to the compound of the Agricultural School. Furthermore there has been to our knowledge no cultivation since 1949 by Arabs beyond a certain line which roughly coincides with the so-called civilian line.

(d) UNTSO's fact-finding investigation did not reveal to what extent the ownership of the land in the Zone was taken into account when the discussions were held and maps drawn in 1949 regarding the partition of the Zone and the drawing of a civilian line.^{5/} However, it would appear that consideration should be given to the land ownership question, especially since neither Israel nor Jordan enjoy sovereignty over any part of the Zone (the Zone being beyond the respective Demarcation Lines). To ascertain the ownership of the land in the Zone a very extensive search of the land titles and deeds would be necessary. From the documents presently held by the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, it appears however that the land in the Zone is predominantly Arab-owned.

^{5/} (a) In this connexion, it is understood that land ownership was not a criterion when the Parties partitioned in 1949 most of the "no-man's land" north and south of Jerusalem.

(b) At the 24th MAC meeting dated 22 November 1949 both Parties agreed to ask an UNMO to propose a division line for the Zone. The Parties agreed that such line should embody the following principles:

- (i) from the strategic point of view the line should not prejudice any of the two Parties;
- (ii) consideration must be given to cultural interests of both sides of the Zone;
- (iii) the area be divided equally.

It is noted that the ownership of land was not a criterion.

(c) See also footnote (R) of appendix 1 to annex H.

8. UNISO has from the outset of the present controversy taken active steps in an effort to assist the Parties in finding a solution to the controversy. First, UNISO endeavoured to arrange a meeting between the Parties to discuss the dispute. Unfortunately, such a meeting could not be arranged. Since October 1956 Israel has not participated in emergency Mixed Armistice Commission meetings (see S/3670 of 13 October 1956). She attends sub-committee meetings of the Mixed Armistice Commission. Israel declined to participate in an emergency meeting to discuss the Jordanian complaints on the present work in the Zone but expressed willingness to attend any other type of meetings including a Sub-Committee meeting of the MAC. Jordan refused to attend any meetings except an emergency meeting on this matter. In recent years Sub-Committee meetings have normally dealt with questions relating to civilian activities in the Zone. UNISO then commenced on 25 July 1957 a fact-finding investigation concerning the Zone which was completed on 22 August. Several meetings were held with representatives of the Jordan and Israel Governments. The Acting Chief of Staff and his representatives also urged Israel on several occasions, particularly on 21 July, 2, 12 and 25 August, to suspend the work for the sake of maintaining the tranquillity which had prevailed in the area for many months. Israel indicated that she did not feel justified in suspending the work which she claimed was a permissible civilian activity on her side of the so-called civilian line. She emphasized that the work was of a purely civilian nature and would be strictly limited to this afforestation project and that, in particular, no buildings would be erected.

V

9. There would appear at this time to be three ways to approach the problem:
- (a) Transform the area between the lines into a no-man's-land and apply article IV (3) of the General Armistice Agreement prohibiting any person from crossing the Demarcation Line into the Zone except United Nations personnel who should have access to the Government House area and to the Arab College.
 - (b) Revert to the conditions existing on 3 April 1949.
 - (c) Arrive at an arrangement which would take into account to some extent at least the changes which have taken place since 1949.

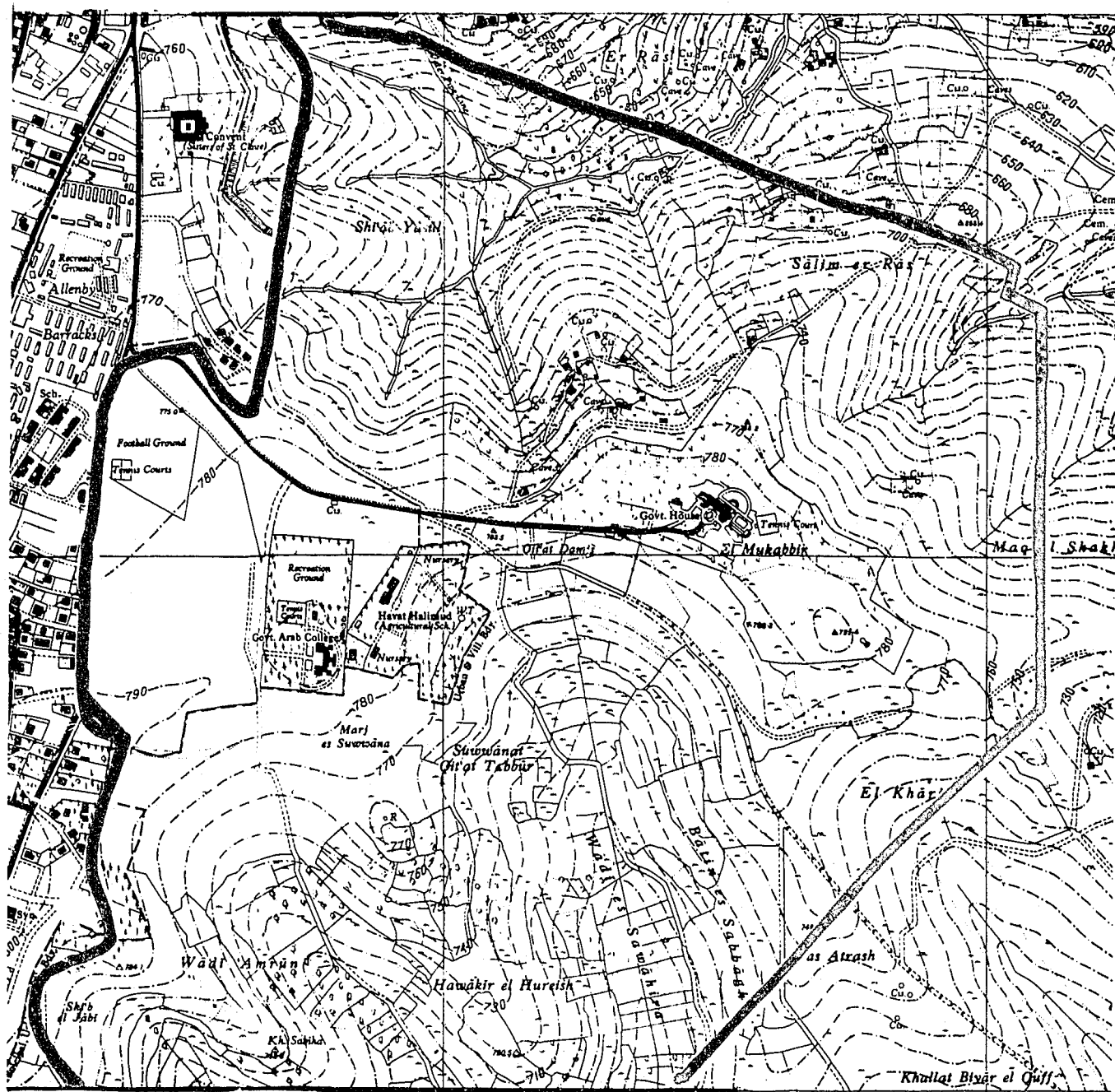
Alternatives (a) and (b) above do not appear to be advisable. Alternative (a) would entail inter alia the evacuation of an entire Arab village, and the closing of the Jerusalem-Bethlehem-Hebron highway and the Jewish Agricultural School. Such drastic measures are not considered necessary. Alternative (b) would also entail the closing of the Jerusalem-Bethlehem-Hebron highway and make barren land which the Parties may so far have justifiably cultivated.

Alternative (c) would appear to offer a reasonable basis for a solution. Civilian activities should continue. However, such activities should be restricted in order not to create new causes of incidents and tension. Therefore, the civilian activities of both Parties should be kept separate. The ownership of the land as established by a thorough search of the land registries should also be respected; i.e. no Arab-owned land would be used by Israeli civilians and vice versa unless otherwise mutually agreed. Thus, the Zone - at least partially - could be used by Israeli and Jordanian civilians without unduly endangering the tranquillity and stability in the area.

10. With a view to finding a solution along the lines of alternative (c), it is recommended that:

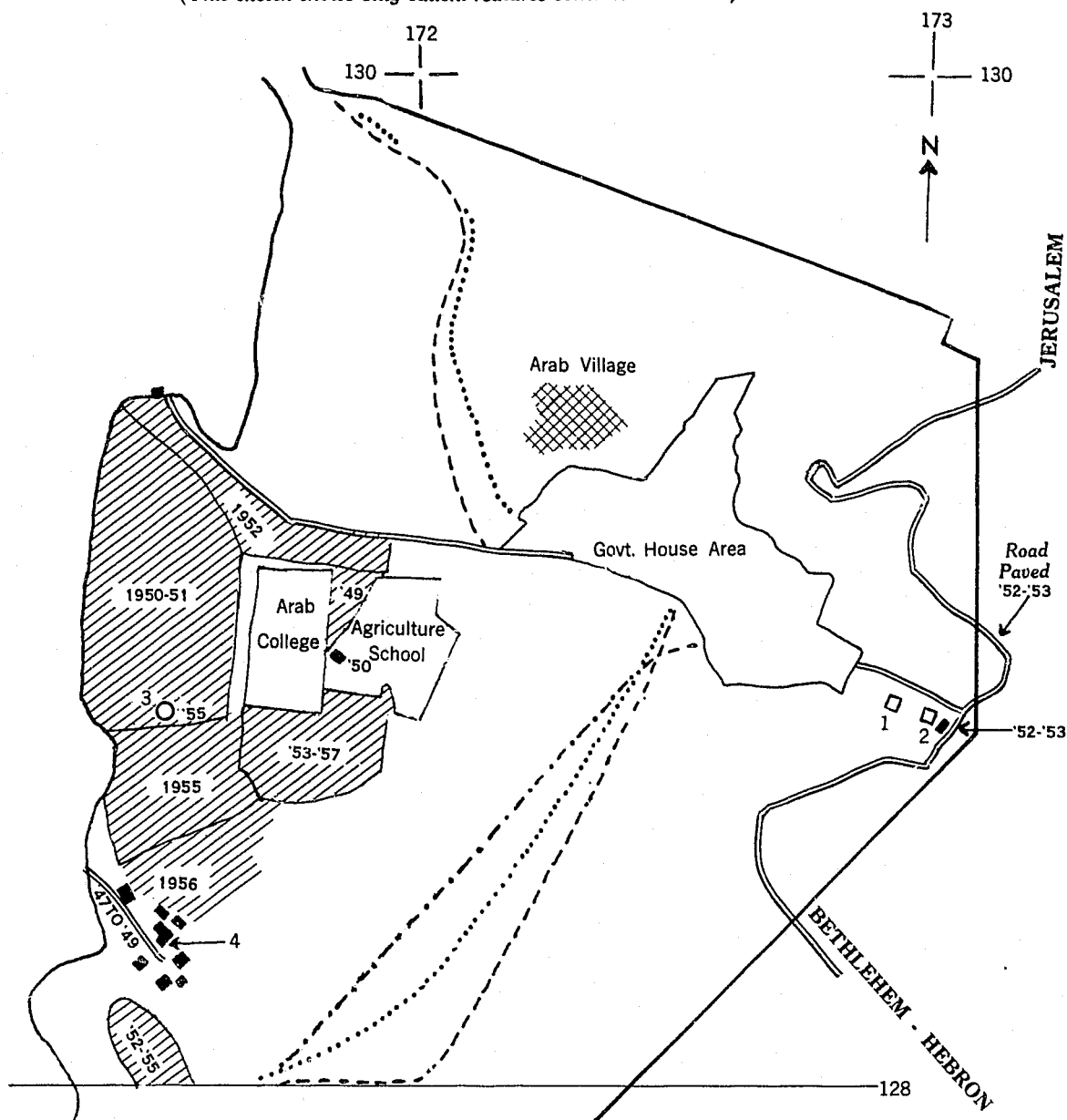
1. The Parties meet and discuss civilian activities in the Zone;
2. Such discussions be conducted through the Mixed Armistice Commission machinery;
3. In order to create an atmosphere which would be more conducive to fruitful discussion, the Government of Israel suspend its afforestation project within the Zone pending the outcome of such discussion;
4. Such discussion be completed within a period of two months (this period is considered to be sufficient if both Parties make a sincere effort to reach a solution);
5. The Security Council be advised of the result of the discussion.

11. The Acting Chief of Staff trusts that the Parties will fully co-operate with UNTSO in restoring the demilitarized status of the Zone.



WORK DONE IN AREA BETWEEN THE LINES FROM 3 APRIL 1949 TO 20 JULY 1957

(This sketch shows only salient features considered relevant)



LEGEND

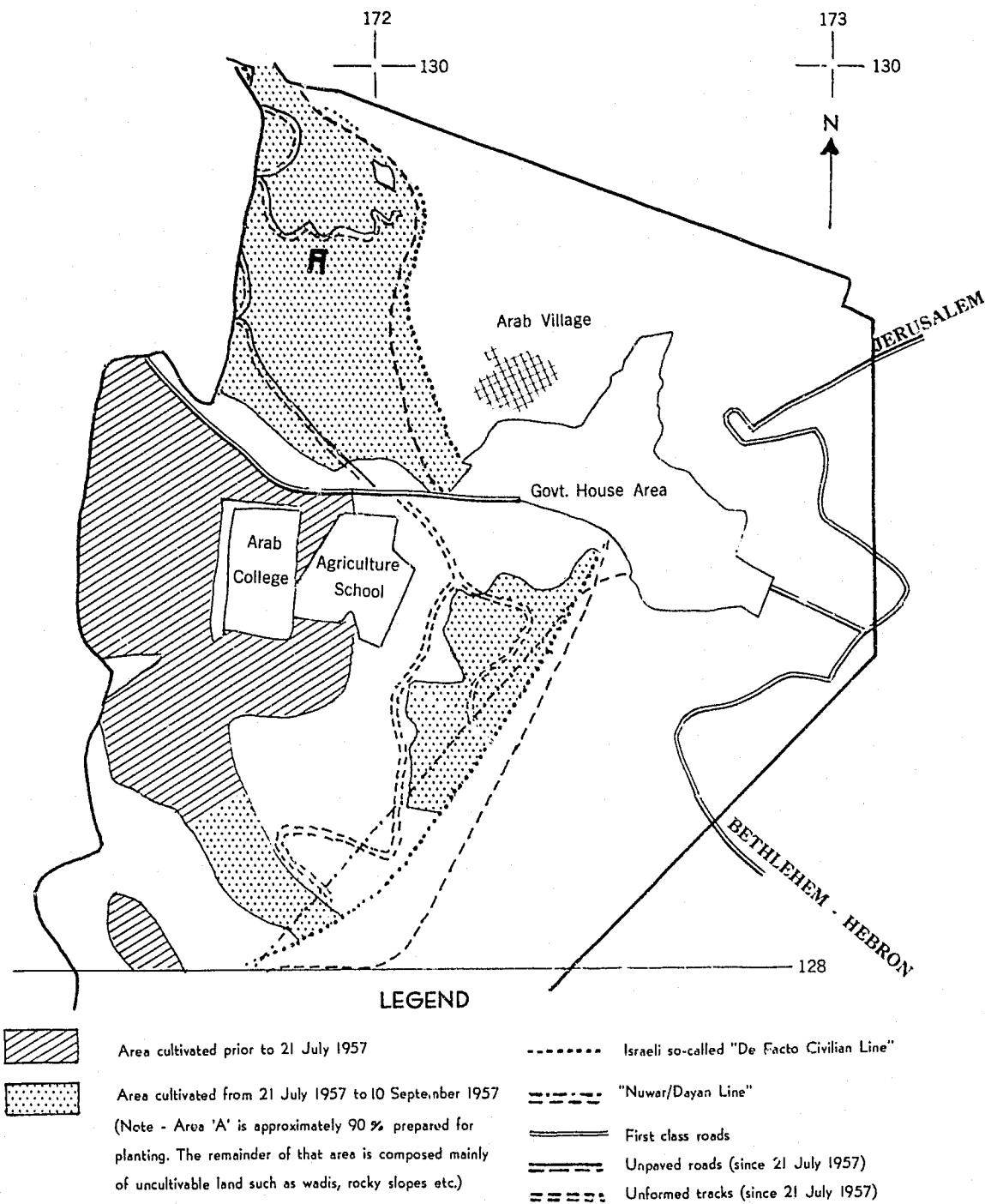
- | | | | |
|-----------|--|---|--|
| ■ '52 | Buildings constructed in year shown, i.e. 1952 | 1 | House constructed prior to 3 April 1949.
Converted to Police Station after 3 April 1949 |
| | Agricultural Development | 2 | House constructed prior to 3 April 1949.
Converted to School 1955 |
| | Israeli so-called "De Facto Civilian Line" | 3 | Concrete water tower constructed 1955 |
| - - - - - | "Nuwar/Dayan Line" | 4 | Buildings constructed between 1947 and 1949 |
| == | Roads | | |

Based on sketch maps prepared by UNTSO, Jerusalem.

WORK DONE FROM 21 JULY 1957 TO 10 SEPTEMBER 1957 INC.

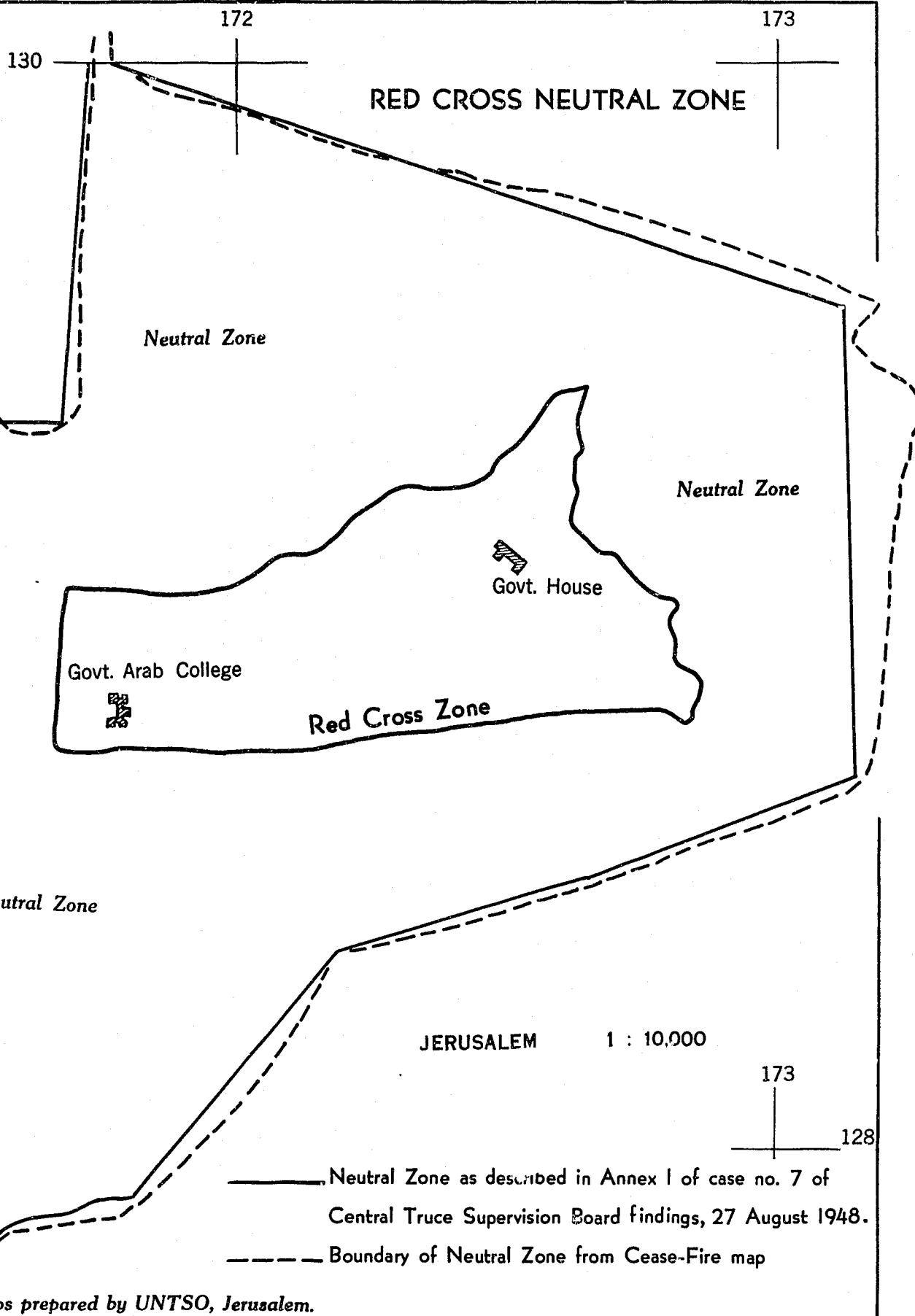
(Small portions of new roads and tracks existed prior to 3 April 1949 but had not been used and have now been cleared)

(This sketch shows only salient features considered relevant)



Based on sketch maps prepared by UNTSO, Jerusalem.

MAP NO. 985 UNITED NATIONS
SEPTEMBER 1957



Based on sketch maps prepared by UNTSO, Jerusalem.

ANNEX E

HEADQUARTERS
TRUCE SUPERVISION ORGANIZATION

Jerusalem, 12 October 1956

Dear Major Hillel,

A recent survey of the Neutral Zone around Government House shows that its demilitarized nature has recently been infringed upon as follows:

Three emplacements have recently been constructed around the water tower at MR 171440 128720. The ruined house at MR 171880 128500 has been fortified and is surrounded by unfinished firing positions. A barbed wire fence of a military nature extends 200 metres, a distance of 50 metres inside the Neutral Zone near the fortified houses inside Israel at MR 1716 1294. A house at MR 172150 129110 is fortified and occupied by Israel Border Police. This house must be considered a military outpost and not a normal civil police station.

I request that these Border Police be withdrawn, and that all works of a military nature be destroyed.

Sincerely yours,

E.L.M. Burns
Major-General
Chief of Staff

Major R. Hillel
Senior Israel Delegate to the
Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan-Israel
Mixed Armistice Commission
Jerusalem

ANNEX F

HEADQUARTERS
TRUCE SUPERVISION ORGANIZATION

Jerusalem, 12 October 1956

Dear Colonel Sa'adi,

Major Austin called on you this morning to discuss your report or complaint to the Mixed Armistice Commission that United Nations Military Observers had been seen in No-Man's-Land at MR 17155-13000, MR 17163-12985, MR 17172-12978 on 10 October 1956. He pointed out to you that the map references quoted were all in Israel and informed you that the Observers in question were completing a survey of the entire Neutral Zone around Government House, checking to see that its demilitarized nature had not been infringed upon.

Their report shows that there has been a listening post newly dug at MR 172300-129240 and a field telephone cable connects it to a Jordanian position outside the Neutral Zone at MR 173200-128720. A house at MR 172560-129400 has been fortified and is used as an observation post, being connected by field telephone cable to the Hashemite Jordan Kingdom police post outside Government House East Gate. From this house, a newly dug trench runs 300 metres NORTHEAST to MR 172850-129570. A further trench system, freshly extended and improved and occupied by Jordanian soldiers runs from Government House East Gate at MR 172870-128820 EAST to MR 173200-128720 and SOUTH-WEST from the East Gate to MR 172560-128150. In addition, an armed Jordanian civilian was seen in the vicinity of the listening post mentioned.

The presence of these soldiers and these newly constructed military works constitute an infringement of the demilitarized nature of the Neutral Zone and I must request their immediate removal.

Sincerely yours,

E.L.M. Burns
Major-General
Chief of Staff

Colonel M. Sa'adi
Senior Jordan Delegate to the
Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan-Israel
Mixed Armistice Commission
Jerusalem

ANNEX G

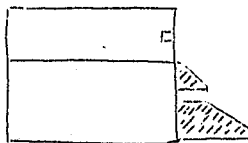
Note: Paragraph figures refer to figures on diagram at Appendix 1.

Inspection of Military positions in Government House area between the Lines - 2-3 August 1957

Israeli side

An inspection team of UNMOs accompanied by the Israeli Delegate inspected the area on 2 August 1957. The following points were noted.

1. A two-storey concrete block house built in 1949. About ten feet by fifteen feet, walls and roof approximately twenty inches thick. Door on north side. False windows on other three sides, of which framework sunk into the concrete. On either side of each window is a loophole with the outside covered by burlap with cement brushed over. This camouflage can be broken through in an instant and two loopholes, one on either side of the false window can be used, which would be suitable for rifles or light machine guns. The block house is built on the edge of a small declivity and the lower storey is reached by steps from the outside of the west wall. This lower storey has a loophole facing south which is about twenty-eight inches wide on the inside and thirty-six inches wide on the outside and would be ideal for a medium machine gun. This is fairly well camouflaged as earth has been built up against the outside of the lower storey and a rough cross section sketch is given below.

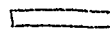
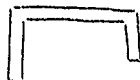


2. Stone house - all the windows have been sandbagged and although this sandbagging is several years old it is still serviceable, and there are no signs of it having been extensively repaired. An old communication trench leads to the house from the south and this is quite overgrown and has not been maintained. Fairly new telephone lines seen leading from the house in a southerly direction.

3. A cement block house about eight by ten feet with a corrugated iron roof. Walls are about eight inches thick, with small loopholes and not very substantial as daylight can be seen through many of the joints.

/...

4. Concrete block house practically identical to number 1, but slightly smaller (built in 1949). The door to the under storey is on the south side and is led to by an old communication trench, which is overgrown.
5. Three diggings. One small circular shell hole, two weapon slits, about three feet deep.



Newly dug and with a camouflage net over the east side. It would appear that these holes were newly dug for the use of a party covering the labourers working in the southern sector.

6. Three fire bays connected by a communication trench varying from three to four feet in depth. Appears to be some years old but is clean and in good condition, but in fact the whole area around this trench had been recently cleared so the work may not have been for the purpose of clearing the trenches.
7. An old overgrown communication trench running roughly east-west. Eastern end was filled in.
8. Old stone house with small windows which have been made into loopholes by packing with stones. A number of weapon slits on the southern slope of which only three were serviceable. All appeared to be quite a few years old.

Jordanian side

An Observer team, accompanied by the Jordanian Delegate, left the East Gate, Government House, at 0520Z on 3 August 1957.

9. The first point visited in this area was a police post. This was a normal type stone building and was connected by crawl trenches to weapon pits. The trenches, about two feet to three feet deep, appeared to be old and had not recently been cleared.
9. (a) Between the police post and the road a concrete bunker was connected by trenches to the post. The firing slits covered the road into Government House.
10. A trench of the same dimension connected the house with a police box immediately outside the East Gate, Government House.

11. A fire bay on high point connected with a trench system which extends east to point 9 and south to grid line 128. All these trenches have been recently deepened to a depth of four to five feet. The weapon pits in some cases have been recently improved with new sandbags and have in most cases been strengthened.
12. An old one-roomed stone building connected to the trench system. The building itself is of poor construction and little attempt has been made to improve or fortify it.
13. A newly sandbagged weapon pit. The Jordanian Delegate informed the Observer team at this point that the whole of the system was originally constructed and manned by the Egyptian Army during the 1948 war.
14. Two fairly solidly constructed buildings of civilian type connected by trenches to the main system. The buildings did not appear to be of recent construction nor were they fortified and showed no sign of recent occupation. A telephone cable left this building and crossed the bitumen road via a small ditch chipped in the road surface which had been subsequently sealed over again.
15. A building of civilian design connected by a newly cleared trench about five feet deep. with the main trench system.
16. A short trench system which has not been maintained.
17. A short trench system running north from the Government House fence to the edge of the Zone. The trenches in this area were three to four feet deep and have not been maintained.
18. The Observer team were then conducted through a small village but no further fortifications or potential fortifications were found.

- - - - - Israeli so-called "De Facto Civilian Line"
 ~~~~~ Trench  
 = = = = Weapon Pit



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130

130

St. Claire's Gate

JERUSALEM

18

Govt. House Area

Arab  
College  
UNTSOAgricultural  
School (ISR.)

East Gate

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ANNEX H

Jerusalem, 26 June 1949

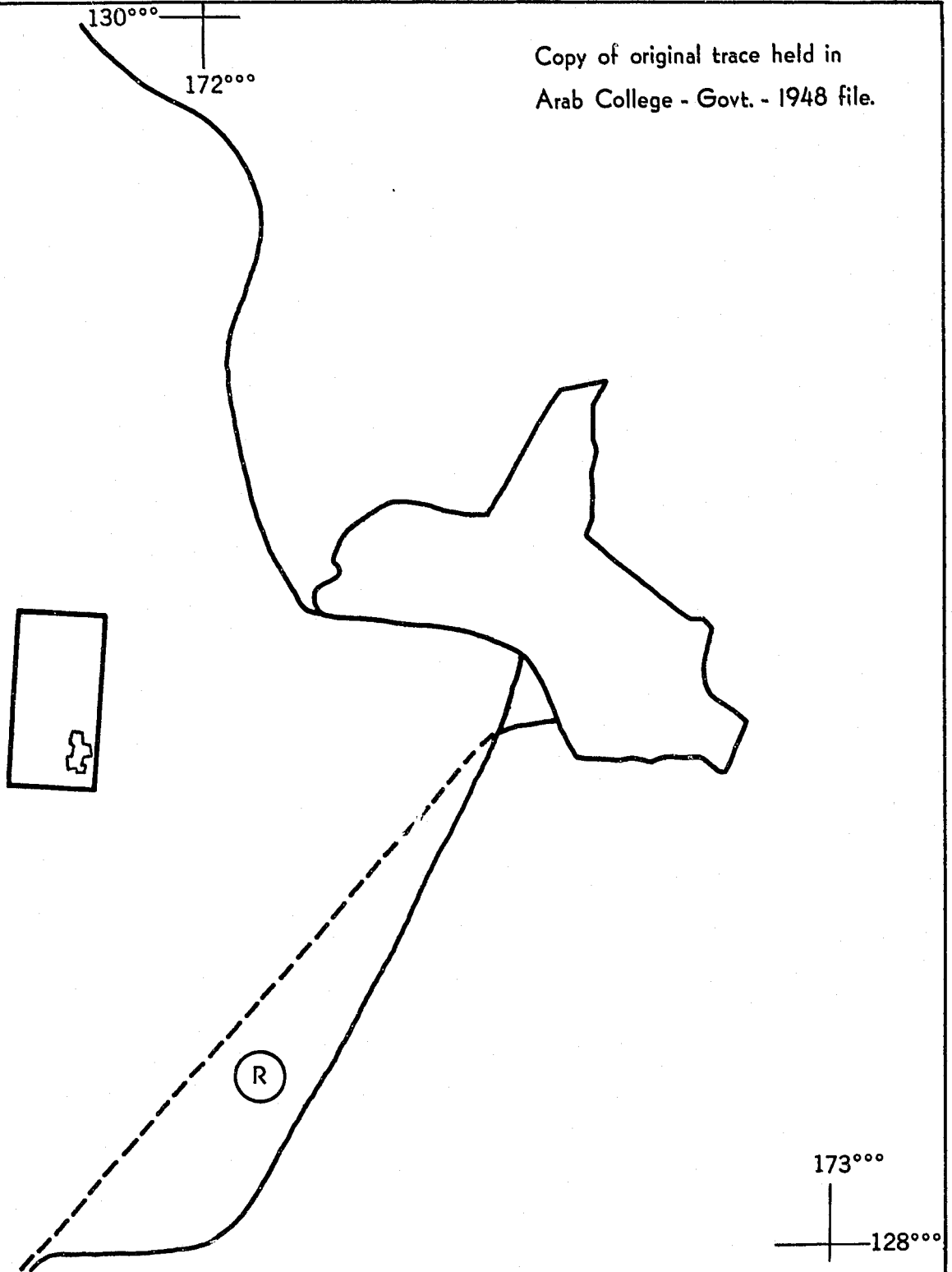
"The proposed decision as revised was as follows:

1. Civilians will be permitted to reside in the Government House area as bounded in the North by grid-line 130, in the East and West by the present demarcation lines of the Rhodes Agreement and in the South by grid-line 128.
2. The Civilian Line dividing the area between the two Parties, as well as the United Nations residential area are described in the attached map. 1/
3. Residence of civilians is however subject to the following regulations for the four months from the date of this decision:
  - (a) The number of civilians resident in each Party's zone shall not exceed two hundred persons;
  - (b) No new construction of a permanent nature will take place in the area;
  - (c) No arms of any kind will be allowed within the area except as required for civil police purposes. The number of civilian police in each Party's zone shall not exceed thirty men;
4. A sub-committee consisting of one representative from each Party from the area will control the extent of civilian movement.
5. Any complaints affecting the area will be referred to the Mixed Armistice Commission."

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1/ See Appendix 1 to this Annex.

Copy of original trace held in  
Arab College - Govt. - 1948 file.



(R) Ali bey's reservations about eventual Arab houses located in the triangle. Col. Dayan agreed to change the line there if Arab houses are found.

New demarcation line agreed  
by both parties. Jer. 1 : 10,000

Lt. Colonel Dayan - Capt. Ali bey Abn Nuwar  
23 June 1949, Govt. House

(SGD) DURRE

ANNEX I

Text of complaint by the Jordanian Delegation  
dated 24 July 1957

Jerusalem, 24 July 1957

Complaining Party/HJK

Date and Time of Incident/21/24.VII.57

Place/Jebel el Mukabber area, Jerusalem

Statement of Facts.

1. On 21 July 1957 Israeli labourers escorted by Israeli security forces entered the No-Man's Land between the lines at approximately MR 1724 1288 and MR 17240 12893 and started digging. The Israeli security forces were engaged in fixing 2-in. mortar gun positions at approximately MR 17170 12835.
2. On 22 July 1957 Israeli labourers escorted by Israeli security forces were seen working in the same area mentioned above, and also in the northwest of the Government House in the area extending between MR 17200 12985 and MR 17180 12985. The security forces accompanying the labourers were armed with Bren guns, automatic weapons and 2-in. mortar guns.
3. On 23 July 1957 Israelis, estimated at sixty labourers, also escorted by Israel security forces, entered the No-Man's Land at the same map references mentioned in paragraph 2 above and started working and erecting barbed wire fences while other Israeli military forces were taking positions at approximately MR's 17215 12912, 17163 12935 and 17165 13004. Mortar guns and machine guns were observed with these locations.
4. On 24 July 1957 the same act was repeated by the Israeli labourers and military forces within the No-Man's-Land, and in addition, 3-in. mortar guns were based in the Arab College yard at approximately MR 17180 12887.
5. The military activities carried out by members of the Israel security forces in the No-Man's-Land is a breach of Article I, paragraphs 2 and 3, of the General Armistice Agreement.
6. Such activities also constitute a breach by Israel of Article III, paragraph 2, of the General Armistice Agreement.

7. Furthermore such acts are considered as flagrant violation of the status quo of the area.

8. Therefore an Emergency Meeting of the Mixed Armistice Commission is requested to decide:

- (1) Cease any further activities of any kind of nature in the No-Man's-Land area.
- (2) Immediate investigation should be carried out on the above-mentioned statement and discussion of this complaint in an Emergency Meeting.

(Signed) Lieutenant Colcrel M.M. Izhaq  
Senior Member  
HJK Delegation

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Up to 10 September twenty-two similar Jordanian complaints have been received by the Mixed Armistice Commission as well as forty-seven letters addressed to the Acting Chief of Staff on the same subject.

