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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Operations Center

India-Pakistan Working Group Situation Report #44

Situation in India-Pakistan as of 0700 hours (EST)
December 15, 1971

1. Ceasefire Proposal

UN Assistant Secretary General Paul Marc Henry yesterday requested our assistance in transmitting a message to UN Secretary General (SYG) U Thant that contained yet another ceasefire proposal (not to be confused with the Niazi proposal reported in Sitreps 42 and 43). The Henry message reads as follows:

"I have been informed by Governor Malik and General Farman Ali that President Yahya Khan strongly desires to put an end to hostilities in EP. For this purpose he wishes to arrange with the Indian Govt an immediate ceasefire period of at least two hours in which discussions for this purpose can take place between the military commanders concerned. The President desires honorable conditions for Pakistani troops and protection of civilians. I pass this message to you for what it is worth, since I have no independent means of verification."

The message was passed late last night to Urquhart of the UN Secretariat, who in turn informed Pak Foreign Minister-designate Bhutto. Bhutto expressed skepticism over the authenticity of appeal and stated that he would have to refer back to Yahya before taking any action. Urquhart expressed dismay over the possibility that Henry might have contributed to confusion by acting on the basis of unverified information and noted that under present circumstances he was not planning for the time being to inform anyone else inside or outside the Secretariat of the proposal.

With regard to the Niazi ceasefire proposal, our Consul General in Calcutta reports that the British had learned of the proposal through their High Commission in Islamabad.

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Although not possessing details, the UK Deputy High Commission in Calcutta had informed the Chief of Staff of the Indian Army Eastern Command (Jacob) of the existence of the proposal. Shortly afterwards, Indian GOC Lt. General Aurora telephoned the CUSC for details. Jacob also contacted our Consul General in hopes of obtaining more details. According to a late message from Calcutta the British had received word from their mission in Islamabad that further discussion of the proposal with the Indians would be "premature" and on this basis had contacted General Aurora to advise him to "cool" the idea. The British speculate that this information presumably would convince Aurora that he is free to go all out against Dacca. (SECRET/EXDIS)

2. Military Situation

As of 0930 local December 15 (2230 EST, December 14) in Dacca, the city was waiting for the Indian advance. During the evening and morning there have been heavy artillery and air rocket attacks on selected targets, and the Indian planes were able to "roam around" facing "practically no anti-aircraft fire".

On the Western front, the tide may be turning definitely in favor of the Indians. Instead of previous claims of success on the Kashmir border, the Pakistani military intelligence briefing claimed that the Pakistanis were "continuing aggressive patrolling" and holding off Indian counter-attacks. Even the Pakistani press has refrained from claims of successes, except for reports of downed Indian planes. The Indians claim to have seized "50 square kilometers" of Pakistani territory near Sialkot in a major counter-thrust, as well as a larger amount of territory in Pakistan's Sindh province.

3. UN Security Council (SC)

Our mission at the UN reports that UK efforts to achieve unanimity on a draft resolution in the SC have encountered difficulties. Pak Foreign Minister-Designate Bhutto has told us that something must be done in view of the imminent attack on Dacca and that he was prepared to accept the UK draft as a basis, albeit with some suggested modifications. His main concern at present is obtaining a ceasefire in the West, and although conceding the likely loss of East Pakistan, he noted that any UN resolution which "legitimizes" the

Indian seizure may be unacceptable.

The Indians and the Soviets have hardened their positions on the British draft resolution concerning the Indo-Pak conflict. Pakistani Deputy Prime Minister Bhutto is reportedly convinced that the Indians and the Soviets are stalling and has indicated that he is prepared to have no resolution rather than one which involves surrender. Our Mission notes that it will not be able to assess the prospects for success of the UN's efforts until the negotiations resume early today. (SECRET/ENDIS)

4. Controversy over U.S. Naval Task Force

The furor continues over U.S. intentions in sending a naval task force, including the aircraft carrier Enterprise into the Bay of Bengal. Wire services report that Indian Ambassador Jha told a press conference yesterday following a meeting with Assistant Secretary Sisco that he was unable to obtain a categorical denial of reports that the U.S. vessels were to establish a beachhead to evacuate Pakistani soldiers and civilians from East Pakistan. Third country diplomats have also voiced concern over U.S. intentions. Indian opinion has reacted negatively to these reports. Pakistani sentiment, in contrast to the growing expressions of anti-Americanism in India, has been outspokenly pro-American in the past few days.

5. Indian General Orders Protection of Foreign Nationals

According to a December 14 radio report from New Delhi, Indian Army Chief of Staff Manekshaw has issued instructions to all his troops in East Pakistan to accord complete protection to all foreign nationals and all ethnic minorities.

6. Refugee Return

The New York office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) informed the Department yesterday that the Indian Government (GOI) has formally requested the UNHCR "focal point" in India to assist in facilitating the return of

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Pakistani refugees in India. The GOI request expressed hope that the repatriation exercise could be concluded "before the beginning of the next monsoon period", i.e. May or June 1972. We are told that the UNHCR plans to respond positively to this request.

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