

Representative of the UAR in New York on the day before the northward phase of the survey was scheduled to begin. It needs to be made clear that most of the discussions with the parties concerning the evacuation of the stranded ships took place before the UAR plan and time-table were submitted to General Bull. It was only at this stage that the proposed survey became a factor. Therefore, earlier discussions about the direction of the evacuation were unrelated to and without knowledge of the survey which, after all, was to be concerned only with questions of technical feasibility of the ultimate removal of the ships in any direction, south or north.

15. In its involvement in the evacuation operation, the United Nations and UNTSO have been guided by the following considerations:

(a) Their primary concern is the maintenance of the Security Council's cease-fire and the avoidance of any situation likely to lead to breaches of it;

(b) Neither side should gain or seek to gain any military, strategic or political advantage from the operation;

(c) The evacuation is a one-time operation and as such is an exception to the 27 July arrangement on movement of boats on the Canal and without prejudice to it;

(d) The evacuation of the stranded ships would remove a source of tension and thereby help to provide a better climate for Ambassador Jarring's continuing efforts;

(e) The recovery of the stranded ships would be in the interest of international amity and of the eight countries whose ships are involved;

(f) Any judgement expressed by the United Nations with regard to the operation or any aspect of it would be based solely on what would appear to be feasible and reasonable, in order to have the operation take place without jeopardy to the cease-fire.

16. On 10 January 1968, the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Republic informed the Secretary-General that his Government had now reached a definite and favourable decision on the evacuation of the stranded ships and had instructed the Suez Canal Authority to undertake the necessary preliminary planning work, which at the current stage would not involve any actual operations in the Canal itself. This planning phase might take some time.