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SECRET

2, Palace Green,  
London, W.8.  
14 September 1955.

To: NAUM, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jerusalem,  
Israel.

From: M. Comay.

Dear Cidor,

EASTERMED F.I.R. - Discussion  
with Ministry of Transport and  
Civil Aviation, London, 12.9.55.

Zurr and myself, accompanied by Gershon Avner, had a two-hour informal meeting on Monday with a group of officials of the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation. E.A. Armstrong (Under-Secretary) was in the Chair, and others present were: C. Goad (Assistant Secretary), R. Rayner (Principal), and Messrs. Lawman and Broughton (Operations Officers in the Directorate of Overseas Navigational Services).

I briefly recapitulated our position, and it was agreed that the present talk would be purely exploratory and non-committal.

The British representatives then outlined their proposal, which was pretty much what we had expected - namely that Nicosia should be the F.I.C. for Cyprus, the sea, and an Upper Level extending over the whole region above 10,000 feet, leaving Beirut, Damascus, and Lod each to act as a separate F.I.C. in its own local area below 10,000 feet.

They produced a map on which the existing F.I.R. boundaries, Control Areas and Advisory Routes were marked, and we then proceeded to clarify a number of points, while completely reserving our position on the proposal as a whole.

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The main points discussed were:

(a) Upper Level: This would apply not only to over-flights, but also to aircraft flying to and from the region. The altitude of 10,000 feet was put forward as a convenient one for distinguishing between pressurised aircraft and low-flying non-pressurised aircraft; it might possibly be set higher - up to 12,000 or even 13,000 feet - if the Arabs insisted.

(b) F.I.C. Boundaries: They would like to have the present Control Areas of Beirut and Lod pushed back as near the coast as possible, so that practically the whole of the sea area would be controlled from Nicosia.

(c) Status of Lod: They indicated that they would like to see Israel included in the Nicosia F.I.C. area, but did not press this when we stated firmly that we would insist on a separate F.I.C. at Lod under any system whereby there would be several F.I.C.'s in the Easternmed region.

(d) Advisory Route Intersections: As you will note from the map, the advisory routes westwards and north-westwards from Lod are intersected by advisory routes from Beirut, in particular by Route 411 from Beirut to Port Said. Zurr explained about the unwritten arrangement we had made with the Lebanese whereby, with regard to the intersection west of Lod, the airspace from 5000 to 8000 feet was kept clear for them, while our planes went through above or below these levels. A corresponding arrangement held good for the northern intersection off Beirut. The British technical representatives maintained that, if their plan was adopted, this arrangement should be abandoned in favour of normal methods of control from the Nicosia F.I.C. We claimed, however, that it should be maintained - because planes to and from Lod should not be held up by small Arab planes flying north-south which might have lodged their flight-plans earlier with Nicosia; because Nicosia was unlikely to have complete information about this local inter-Arab traffic; and because any example of direct co-operation between us and the Arabs deserved to be encouraged.

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(e) Security Needs: We pointed out that Israel's prohibited area was necessitated by our special security situation, and that the principle of an Upper Level with its F.I.C. at Nicosia could only be considered if it could be reconciled with our security requirements. Some discussion then took place about submission of flight-plans, about our right to veto any flights on security grounds, about whether aircraft entering our area about the 10,000 feet level should be required to report to Lod and identify themselves, and so forth. This discussion was superficial, but at least gave clear notice that this would be a primary consideration for us.

(f) Air-Sea Rescue: The British experts stressed air-sea rescue co-ordination as an important argument for concentrating control at Nicosia. Zurr explained, however, that this has not presented any serious problems in practice. There were no difficulties as between Nicosia and Lod, and we felt no hesitation about extending full aid to any Arab planes that got into difficulties.

(g) Communications Network: It was not contemplated that the British proposal would require any radical change in the existing communications arrangements. Armstrong stated that Nicosia would not want to take over any of the frequencies now at Lod or any other station.

Before the meeting broke up, it was agreed that our considered views on their proposal should be communicated either in Montreal or London, at our discretion, though any further clarification of technical points might be done on the spot at Nicosia, and the U.K. representative there, Mr. Finch, would be briefed accordingly. Armstrong was anxious to have our reactions by the beginning of October, but we did not commit ourselves to this.

Zurr and I are travelling back to Canada to-day (Wednesday), and I shall write to you from there, with comments on the British proposals, after we have had a chance to discuss it thoroughly.

M.S. Comay.

