LEAGUE OF NATIONS

PARTICULARS WITH REGARD TO THE POSITION OF ARMAMENTS IN THE VARIOUS COUNTRIES

49. * COMMUNICATION FROM THE HEJAZ, NEJD AND DEPENDENCIES GOVERNMENT.

Note by the Secretary-General.

At the request of the Hejaz Government, the Secretary-General has the honour to communicate to the Governments invited to the Conference on the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments a letter from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Hejaz, Nejd and Dependencies, dated January 24th, 1932, giving information on the armaments of the said country.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF HEJAZ, NEJD AND DEPENDENCIES TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

Mecca, January 24th, 1932.

With reference to your letter of October 3rd, 1931, regarding the invitation to His Majesty's government to attend the General Disarmament Conference which will be held on February 2nd, 1932, and following upon the telegram which I sent you on November 19th, I have the honour to submit to you herewith a note on the present situation of the armaments of the Kingdom of the Hejaz, Nejd and Dependencies.

I am further sending you the returns which have to be filled in in accordance with your circular letter (C.L.124.1931.IX.) of June 13th last, with regard to the detailed particulars in the position of the land, sea and air forces and military expenditure of this Kingdom.

I should like to call your attention to the fact that these returns are without prejudice to any request for increase which my Government may think necessary to submit to the Conference.

I would also remark that the particulars submitted are succinct and subject to correction; they should only be regarded as preliminary information intended to give a general idea of our armaments.

The returns requested have not all been sent, either because they concern formations not existing in this country or because it was impossible to give all the detailed information requested.

Requesting you to be good enough to publish this memorandum with its annexes and to communicate it to the States taking part in the General Disarmament Conference.

(Signed) FAISAL.

* This figure indicates that forty-nine documents in regard to the position of armaments in the different countries have been published.
MEMORANDUM ON THE PRESENT STATE OF DEFENCE IN THE KINGDOM OF THE HEJAZ, NEJD AND DEPENDENCIES.

1. The Kingdom of the Hejaz and Nejd was constituted in its present form at the end of the year 1926. It has been built up by degrees since the break-up of the Ottoman Empire by the annexation of fresh areas relinquished by that Empire to the region of Nejd, which, from the point of view of area and population, is the most important part of the Kingdom as a whole. In 1921, the northern district of Nejd, known as Jebel Shammar, was annexed to Nejd. One year later came the annexation of the district known as Wadi Sirhan. One year afterwards it was the turn of the Assir to be united to the Kingdom. Lastly, in 1924 to 1926, came the annexation of the Kingdom of the Hejaz, which, during the world war, had become detached from the Ottoman Empire and which was recognised by the Allies during the war and afterwards, together with the Idrissite district. All these districts form what is now known as the "Kingdom of the Hejaz, Nejd and Dependencies".

2. The length of the frontiers of this Kingdom exceeds 4,000 miles, nearly half of which consists of sea-coast. The western part of the sea-coast extends along the Red Sea to the head of the Gulf of Akaba. To the north the coast extends along the Persian Gulf from Ras-el-Kala in the north to the Katar Peninsula in the south. The line joining the two extreme points of the northern frontier crosses a vast zone formed of almost waterless deserts with difficult tracks and great stretches of arid sand. To the south the frontier from east to west is no better. Its western portion is mountainous and very difficult of access, while the eastern part is formed of vast sandy and barren deserts, very difficult to cross, known under the name of Rob-el-Khali. In these extensive regions, composed of deserts, denuded plateaus of sand, dunes and volcanic soil, communications are difficult, especially on account of the intense drought, the extreme heat, the complete absence of rivers and running water and the great distances between the rare wells which are utilisable in the country. There is an almost complete lack of modern means of communication in these areas. There are no railways except a single line, which has been abandoned since the world war, situated in the western part of the country and connecting Medina with Syria. Camels are the principal means of transport and motor-cars cannot compete with them in country of this type.

3. The great majority of the inhabitants of this country are nomad Beduins, who go from one place to another in search of pasture land and rain-water. They live in tents, which they carry with them wherever they go. These Beduins are accustomed to a special kind of life, full of risks, sudden raids and perpetual strife. Their love of liberty makes it difficult for them to submit to authority. The difficulty is intensified by the fact that the country has many deserts, few lines of communication and little water; that it contains unexplored territory without known limits, and that the Beduins never settle down in a particular place where they could be kept under control.

4. The western part of the Kingdom—i.e., the Hejaz—is called the "Holy Territories" and, in the eyes of all the Moslems throughout the world, this area is sacred, since it contains the two holy places of Mecca the Honoured and Medina the Illuminated, where, every year, a large number of Moslems from every point of the Moslem world go to perform the obligation of pilgrimage, which is one of the five pillars of Islam. Mecca is in the interior of the country 75 kilometres from the coast and 430 kilometres from Medina to the north. Medina is about twice as far from the sea as Mecca.

Between these two holy cities live Arab Beduin tribes known from time immemorial for the difficulties they put in the way of communications between the two cities and their hostility to those travelling between Mecca and Medina.

5. In a country such as that described in the foregoing paragraphs everything combines to make the maintenance of security and the protection of routes extremely difficult, so that the position of any Government is full of responsibility. The extent of the territory, the length of the frontiers, the difficulties of communication, the absence of railways, the scarcity of water, the natural constitution of the soil, the drought, the presence of nomad Beduins accustomed to theft and pillage—all these are causes which increase the Government's difficulties in ensuring safety in the interior, protecting the lives and property of Moslem pilgrims and providing for the defence of the country in case of external peril.

The question of security has been one of the greatest obstacles encountered by every Government of the country since the remotest times. This is the imperative reason which has obliged the Ottoman Empire to create a special regime for the Hejaz. Nevertheless, security has never been as great as to-day since the establishment of His Majesty's present Government. Besides the external dangers which might threaten the country, the internal troubles with which the Government has to deal are sufficient to engage its full attention and to constitute a task demanding a great deal of expenditure and effort.
6. Apart from the Hejaz, the Ottoman influence on this Kingdom has been more nominal than real. Nevertheless, the Ottoman Government, in order to provide for security in the Hejaz and in Assir alone, was obliged to maintain large regular forces there and various formations of armed Beduins, composed as follows:

(1) Hejaz Division (10,000 men);
(2) Assir Division (10,000 men);
(3) Gendarmerie Regiment (3,000 men);
(4) Railway Battalion (1,000 men);
(5) Forces constituted by the Bicha Beduins (1,000 men);
(6) The Ogueil Camel Corps (1,500).

In addition to these, there are the special formations recruited among the tribes of the territories through which passes the road to the Holy Places. These areas were only part of the Ottoman Empire, which it had to defend and in which it had to enforce its authority whenever necessary. In spite of the above, the situation from the point of view of security was unsatisfactory. The Ottoman influence in the other parts of our present Kingdom was not prevent the inhabitants of these vast areas from living in war and strife.

7. The above particulars give some indication of the manifold difficulties encountered by His Majesty's Government in maintaining internal security, apart from the anxieties created by threats on the other side of its frontiers. They explain its responsibilities and the difficulties it has to overcome in order to ensure the internal and external security of this very extensive Kingdom, whose means of communication are, as already explained, both difficult and dangerous.

His Majesty's Government has, of course, relied to a great extent on fear and moral prestige; nevertheless, these two elements, although important, are not alone sufficient to maintain security within the country. Unfortunately, His Majesty's Government has not inherited any administrative and military organisation from previous Governments. Ever since it was established, it has had to follow an untrodden path and to lay down for itself a line of conduct adapted to the temperament of the country, its vast area, the customs of its inhabitants and its limited resources.

Although His Majesty's Government entertains no hostile sentiments towards any neighbouring Government, it cannot, in the absence of any international means of restraint, rely solely on good faith to repulse any foreign aggression. It has shown its good intentions towards its neighbours as far as possible by establishing lasting ties of friendship and loyal relations between itself and its neighbours. It has also concluded with the Government of Iraq an arbitration protocol for the settlement of any disputes which may arise between the two parties, and it has concluded a similar protocol with its southern neighbour, the Yemen. Everyone will doubtless testify to the satisfactory nature of the decision rendered by my August Sovereign in the dispute which he was requested to settle, a decision which was contrary to his own interests in the frontier district between this country and the Yemen. His Majesty's Government has endeavoured by all possible means to allay any fears of a conflict arising between this country and its neighbours, and has done its utmost to become a useful member of the international community and a factor working for general peace by its desire for co-operation with a view to the establishment of a lasting general peace; one of the least of its acts was to accede to the Peace Pact, which it signed in August 1928.

8. The natural and social conditions of this country are so extraordinary that they may be regarded as peculiar to it. This also applies to the military organisation, which cannot be compared with that of any other State to-day. It is an organisation based on the nature of the country, the condition of the inhabitants, and more especially on the peculiarities of nomadic tribes and the country's slender resources. The short time for which the present organisation has been in existence, and the fact that the material and organisation which it inherited from previous Governments were very limited must also be taken into account. It is certain that the creation of a military organisation on the lines of the organisations of other States to-day would swallow up the whole of the country's budget; it would be unable to meet the cost of such an organisation. That is why the Government, as already stated, has taken special measures adapted to its financial resources and to the necessity for maintaining security. It relies as much as possible on the awe of authority and has reaped great advantage from this. In any case, its revenue was insufficient to build up armaments on modern lines and, moreover, it has not yet had sufficient time to do so. In view of the above, it is necessary to emphasise that the financial organisation of the country can in no way be regarded as adequate to maintain internal security and to meet unforeseen contingencies.

The actual organisation at the present time, which is all that has been possible to create during the few years which have elapsed since the Government was established, owing to the financial and administrative situation, is shown in the annexes attached to this note. His Majesty's Government is of opinion that this situation cannot affect any request which it may be obliged to submit to the Conference. It reserves the right to present any claim compatible
with the extent of its territories, the length of its frontiers and the maintenance of its security
on an equal footing to that of other countries of similar area and social and geographical
position.

To this note is attached all the information available in regard to the military organisation
in the Kingdom of the Hejaz, Nejd and Dependencies. Some of these particulars may need
to be modified after a further careful examination. Apart from the fact that it is not normal,
and irrespective of the Government's resources, this organisation must not be taken as a basis
for my Government's demands at the Conference and does not correspond to what is necessary
to maintain internal security and protect the long frontier over a vast area where water is
scarce and communications are difficult.

Table I. — Total Armed Forces.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of men</th>
<th>Number of officers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43,437</td>
<td>734</td>
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EXPLANATORY NOTES.

(1) The armed forces consist of:
   (a) Police, 33 officers and 896 men;
   (b) Regular troops, 53 officers and 1,780 men;
   (c) Camel corps, 250 officers and 12,500 men;
   (d) Coastguards, 14 officers and 211 men;
   (e) Garrison troops, 350 officers and 26,500 men;
   (f) Frontier guards, 23 officers and 1,400 men;
   (g) Air force, 11 officers and 150 men.

(2) Military service is not compulsory and men are engaged by voluntary enlistment.
In war-time, all males between 14 and 65 are liable for active service.

(3) In certain units the period of service is not specified, the men serving for as long as
they wish or for as long as they give satisfaction.

(4) The police, coastguards and regular troops serve under contract for a definite period
which may not exceed five years.

Table II. — Air Force.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of aeroplanes</th>
<th>Total horse-power</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3,780</td>
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Table III. — Annual Expenditure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guineas</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coastguards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frontier guards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Air force</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material and ammunition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport and communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
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</table>