

**Agenda item 73: Question of impartial investigation of charges of use by United Nations forces of bacteriological warfare**

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**DOCUMENT A/2231**

**United States of America: request for the inclusion of an additional item in the agenda of the seventh session**

[Original text: English]  
[20 October 1952]

Letter dated 20 October 1952 from the Chairman of the United States delegation to the General Assembly of the United Nations, addressed to the Secretary-General

New York, 20 October 1952

I have the honour to request, under rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, that an item entitled "Question of impartial investigation of

charges of use by United Nations forces of bacteriological warfare" be added to the agenda of the General Assembly as an important and urgent question.

In connexion with the above-mentioned request, I attach an explanatory memorandum in accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure.

Accept, Excellency, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) Warren R. AUSTIN

#### EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

Since February 1952, the world has been exposed to a false and malicious campaign, conducted by the Soviet Union and Soviet bloc States and by organizations dominated and controlled by the Soviet Union, to the effect that United Nations forces fighting against Communist aggression in Korea have resorted to the use of bacteriological warfare. In order to inspire and foster hatred and in order to discredit the United Nations action in Korea, the Soviet bloc has launched a propaganda campaign world-wide in scope and has utilized fully all Communist-dominated propaganda organizations and all techniques, including the government-controlled radio system and world-wide Communist Press and packed meetings of Communist front organizations. In this propaganda campaign the Soviet bloc has sought to establish its charges by fabricating "scientific evidence", by forming so-called "investigation commissions" carefully selected to ensure their partiality, and by inducing so-called "confessions" of American prisoners of war—in short, by utilizing all familiar elements of Soviet propaganda in a highly intensified form.

Responsible officials of the United States and also of the Unified Command have demonstrated the complete falsity of these charges. The Secretary of State of the United States categorically and unequivocally denied the charges on 4 March 1952. General Matthew S. Ridgway, Commander-in-Chief of the United Nations Command in Korea when the charges were first made, on several occasions stated that the allegations were false in their entirety and that no element of the United Nations Command has employed either germ or gas warfare in any form and at any time. The Secretary of Defense of the United States, on 16 May, characterized the charges as "abominable, malicious falsehood".

The Secretary of State of the United States, on 11 March 1952, addressed a letter to the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) at Geneva, Switzerland, suggesting that, in the interest of having facts clearly established by a disinterested international body, the ICRC should make arrangements to conduct an investigation of these charges. The ICRC, on 12 March, offered to the Unified Command and to the North Korean and Chinese Communist authorities to set up a committee under its direction to investigate the charges. The committee, as set forth in the ICRC communication to the parties,

would have been composed of persons who would offer every guarantee of moral and scientific independence which could be offered by experts who have highest qualifications, especially in epidemiology; it would have included two or three scientific experts to be proposed by the National Red Cross Societies of Asian countries not participating in the Korean conflict. The ICRC requested assurances of co-operation by parties on both sides of the front. The Secretary of State, on behalf of the United States Government and on behalf of the Unified Command, promptly accepted the offer of the ICRC. The Communists have indicated their negative response through engaging in a propaganda campaign to blacken the character of the ICRC.

When the charges of bacteriological warfare were first made, the World Health Organization (WHO) offered to assist in combating any epidemics existing in North Korea and China, regardless of source. The Unified Command agreed to co-operate fully with WHO. The WHO offer was transmitted to the North Korean and Chinese Communist authorities on three different occasions by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. After a month of silence, the offer of assistance was rejected by the North Korean and Chinese Communist authorities and WHO was not permitted to enter territories under their control.

In June 1952, the United States brought the matter before the United Nations Security Council with a view to lessening international tensions by establishing the facts. The resolution submitted by the United States (S/2671) requested the ICRC, with the aid of such scientists of international reputation and such other experts as it might select, to investigate the charges and report the results to the Security Council as soon as possible. The resolution further called upon all governments and authorities concerned to accord to the ICRC full co-operation, including right of entry to, and free movement in, such areas as the Committee might deem necessary in the performance of its task. At the 587th meeting of the Security Council, this resolution received ten affirmative votes, but failed to carry because of a veto of the Soviet Union. At the same meeting, the United States delegation introduced a further draft resolution (S/2688), which, on the basis of the Soviet bloc refusal to agree to an impartial investigation, concluded that the charges must be presumed to be without substance and false and condemned the practice of fabricating and disseminating such false charges. At the 590th meeting of the Security Council, this resolution received nine affirmative votes but failed to carry because of the veto of the Soviet Union. Copies of the vetoed Security Council draft resolutions are attached to this memorandum.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the unqualified denial by the United States and the Unified Command of the Soviet charges that

<sup>1</sup> Not reproduced here. For document S/2671, see *Official Records of the Security Council, Seventh Year, Supplement for April, May and June 1952*. For document S/2688, see *Official Records of the Security Council, Seventh Year, 587th meeting*.

bacteriological warfare is being used in Korea, and despite the utilization by the Soviet Union of its veto to block an impartial investigation, the Soviet Union has reiterated the charges and has continued its campaign of hate and vilification based upon these charges. Charges have once more been repeated in the General Assembly in the statement of the representative of Poland before the plenary meeting on 17 October and in the statement of the representative of the Soviet Union before the plenary meeting on 18 October.

These charges are in fact designed to discredit the United Nations action in Korea and are thus directed against the United Nations itself. The Soviet Union, in making the charges nominally against the United States, is following its consistent policy of refusing to recognize the United Nations role in the Korean conflict.

These false charges made by the Soviet Union, the persistent refusal of those making the charges to agree to an impartial investigation, and the malicious propaganda campaign based upon such charges impair friendly relations and create a situation which should be considered by the General Assembly as an urgent and important matter and on which appropriate action should be taken.

*Security Council document S/2671*

DRAFT RESOLUTION SUBMITTED BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA ON 20 JUNE 1952

QUESTION OF REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED BACTERIOLOGICAL WARFARE

*The Security Council,*

*Noting* the concerted dissemination by certain governments and authorities of grave accusations charging the use of bacteriological warfare by United Nations forces,

*Noting* that the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics has repeated these charges in organs of the United Nations,

*Recalling* that when the charges were first made the Unified Command for Korea immediately denied the charges and requested that an impartial investigation be made of them,

1. *Requests* the International Committee of the Red Cross, with the aid of such scientists of international reputation and such other experts as it may select, to investigate the charges and to report the results to the Security Council as soon as possible;

2. *Calls upon* all governments and authorities concerned to accord to the International Committee of the Red Cross full co-operation, including the right of entry to, and free movement in, such areas as the Committee may deem necessary in the performance of its task;

3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to furnish the Committee with such assistance and facilities as it may require.

*Security Council document S/2688*

DRAFT RESOLUTION SUBMITTED BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AT THE 587TH MEETING OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON 3 JULY 1952

QUESTION OF REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED BACTERIOLOGICAL WARFARE

*The Security Council,*

*Noting* the concerted dissemination by certain governments and authorities of grave accusations charging the use of bacteriological warfare by United Nations forces,

*Recalling* that when the charges were first made the Unified Command for Korea immediately denied the charges and requested that an impartial investigation be made of them,

*Noting* that the Chinese Communist and North Korean authorities failed to accept an offer by the International Committee of the Red Cross to carry out such an investigation but continued to give circulation to the charges,

*Noting* that the World Health Organization offered to assist in combating any epidemics in North Korea and China, and that the Unified Command for Korea agreed to co-operate,

*Noting* with regret that the Chinese Communist and North Korean authorities rejected the offer and refused to permit the entry of the World Health Organization teams into territories controlled by these authorities,

*Noting* that the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics has, in the United Nations, repeated the charges that United Nations forces were engaging in bacteriological warfare,

*Noting* that the draft resolution submitted by the Government of the United States proposing an impartial investigation of these charges by the International Committee of the Red Cross was rejected by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and that by reason of the negative vote of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics the Security Council was prevented from arranging for such an impartial investigation,

1. *Concludes*, from the refusal of those governments and authorities making the charges to permit impartial investigation, that these charges must be presumed to be without substance and false;

2. *Condemns* the practice of fabricating and disseminating such false charges, which increases tension among nations and which is designed to undermine the efforts of the United Nations to combat aggression in Korea and the support of the people of the world for these efforts.