

Statement by Dean Acheson (17 October 1949)

Caption: On 17 October 1949, Dean Acheson, US Secretary of State, welcomes the ceasefire in Greece and comments on the military situation in the Balkans and on the activities being carried out by the Greek guerrilla forces.

Source: Department of State (Ed.). A Decade of American Foreign Policy, Basic Documents 1941-1949. Washington: Department of State Printing Office, 1985. 969 p. ISBN 0403000084. p. 554-555.

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URL: http://www.cvce.eu/obj/statement_by_dean_acheson_17_october_1949-en-f906b63f-bffd-4897-b4b8-ec454663e76d.html

Last updated: 03/07/2015

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As a result of the Greek Army offensives in October in the Grammos-Vitsi areas, Greek Government forces now for the first time since the war command the northern borders of Greece. Guerrilla forces operating within Greece amount to approximately two thousand, scattered in small groups over the entire country. In most cases, these groups are mainly concerned with self-protection and raiding for food and are continually being pursued and harassed. There has been a noticeable trend of the leaders and some of the members of these groups to work their way toward Albania.

Most of the guerrillas who fled from Greece as the result of the Grammos-Vitsi campaigns entered Albania. There are approximately eight thousand five hundred guerrillas located in Albania. There is estimated to be about three thousand guerrillas in Bulgaria. Some of these guerrillas in Bulgaria entered the country as the result of recent operations in northeastern Greece, but the majority of them have been in Bulgaria over a period of time as a part of guerrilla operations and hospitalization which has taken place in Bulgaria. There is no objective information available to the Department giving evidence that the guerrillas in either Albania or Bulgaria have been disarmed or interned.

According to the United Nations Special Committee, the Yugoslav Government has closed the Greek borders, precluding the entry of fleeing guerrillas, and has not recently lent support to these forces. In general, the closed border appears to have been effective, except in a few cases in which some guerrilla forces have entered Yugoslavia where the terrain is very rugged and sparsely manned by the Yugoslavs. It is not believed that there is a large number of guerrillas now remaining in Yugoslavia.

Unconfirmed reports have indicated that guerrillas located in Albania are being moved by sea or air from Albania to Bulgaria, Rumania, and possibly other satellite countries. The Department is in possession of no information indicating the purpose of this reported redistribution.

The "cease fire" guerrilla announcement is, in any case, a practical recognition of the state of affairs existing at this time. The stated purpose of the announcement, in order to "save Greece from destruction," must be viewed with some scepticism in as much as during guerrilla operations in force in Greece, they engaged to the fullest extent possible in the destruction of the Greek economy and resorted to every crime against humanity, including murder, arson, kidnapping, wholesale slaughter, abrogation of all liberties, and terrorizing whole areas. Now that these guerrillas who are located in Greece are forced to devote their activities to self-preservation and the majority of the guerrilla forces, because they are located outside of Greece, can no longer indulge in bringing about ruin and disaster, it is natural that they would attempt to make political salvage by attributing their defeat to the tardily announced desire "to save Greece from destruction."