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Six Day War Comprehensive Timeline

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March 8th 1965

"We shall not enter Palestine with its soil covered in sand, we shall enter it with its soil saturated in blood" - President of Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser [\[20\]](#)

[Jan - March 1967](#)

In the first quarter of 1967 there were over 270 border "incidents" causing rising concern in Israel.

[Feb 22nd 1967](#)

President Attassi of Syria: **"it is the duty of all of us now to move from defensive positions to offensive positions and enter the battle to liberate the usurped land...Everyone must face the test and enter the battle to the end."** [\[1\]](#)

[March 3rd 1967](#)

Landmine injures tractorist in Kibbutz Shamir.

[March 12th 1967](#)

Explosion on train tracks near Kibbutz Lahav.

[March 26th 1967](#)

Two Palestinians killed trying to demolish a water pump near Arad.

[April 7th 1967](#)

Syrian gunners fired from their Golan Heights position on an Israeli tractor farming in the demilitarised zone. Artillery fire was exchanged and the fight escalated. Israel sent airplanes against the Syrian gun positions and several Syrian villages. The Syrians sent up MiG jets and an all-out dogfight ensued – Israel downed six Syrian MiG 21 fighters and chased the remainder all the way back to Damascus. [\[2\]](#)

[April 8th 1967](#)

Syria's information minister Mahmoud Zubi: **"(this battle will be)...followed by more severe battles until**

Palestine is liberated and the Zionist presence ended.” [1]

[May 7th 1967](#)

Syria shells Israeli village of Ein Gev in Israel - *The New York Times*

[May 12th 1967](#)

"In view of the fourteen incidents of sabotage and infiltration perpetrated in the past month alone, Israel may have no other choice but to adopt suitable countermeasures against the focal points of sabotage. Israel will continue to take action to prevent any and all attempts to perpetrate sabotage within her territory. There will be no immunity for any state which aids or abets such acts." - PM Levi Eshkol speech [10]

[May 13th 1967](#)

Soviets inform Anwar Sadat in Moscow that Israel is massing 10-12 brigades in preparation for an attack on Syria, supposedly to take place May 17. He was told to expect **"an Israeli invasion of Syria immediately after Independence Day, with the aim of overthrowing the Damascus regime"** [10] The information is false, as were several similar previous Soviet warnings.

[NOTE: Israel was very aware that Russia was fomenting problems, not only by misinformation, but by active support for terrorism emanating from Syria. See [Abba Eban's account here](#)]

[May 14th 1967](#)

Israel learns that Egyptian troops have been put on alert and begun reinforcing units in the Sinai **"in impressive proportions and with unusual openness, artillery-towing trucks filled with combat-equipped soldiers rolling through Cairo's streets in broad daylight."** ...Foreign correspondents placed the size of the unit at a full army division. [3]

Egyptian Battle Order No. 1 issued: **"...Raising the level of preparedness to full alert for war, beginning 14.30, 14 May 1967;"** -*Field Marshal Abd al-Hakim Amer*
- [more detailed text here](#).

[May 15th 1967](#)

Israel's Prime Minister Levi Eshkol and members of the Cabinet responded by ordering some regular armoured units to reinforce the Sinai front and drafted a message to ensure Egypt understood that Israel was responding to Egyptian actions and not massing troops on its own initiative:

"Israel wants to make it clear to the government of Egypt that it has no aggressive intentions whatsoever against any Arab state at all" [4]

[May 16th 1967](#)

Egypt moves its forces eastward across the Sinai desert towards the Israeli border.

Nasser demands withdrawal of 3,400 man UN Emergency Force: Major General Indarjit Rikhye, commander of United Nations Emergency Force summoned to the Office of the UAR Liaison Staff in Gaza to be handed this message from General Mahmoud Fawzi, chief of staff of the Egyptian Army:

Commander UNEF (Gaza)

To your information, I gave my instructions to all UAR forces to be ready for action against Israel the moment it might carry out any aggressive action against any Arab country. Due to these instructions our

troops are already concentrated in Sinai on our eastern border. For the sake of the complete security of all UN troops...I request that you issue your orders to withdraw all troops immediately. [5] *[NOTE: General Rikhye was not authorised to undertake any such action.]*

By this time Egypt had added a further 30,000 troops to the 30-35 thousand permanently stationed on the peninsula, plus 200 tanks, and it was continuing to pour in more troops all the time. [9]

"The existence of Israel has continued too long. We welcome the Israeli aggression. We welcome the battle we have long awaited. The peak hour has come. The battle has come in which we shall destroy Israel." - *Cairo Radio*

[May 17th 1967](#)

On learning of Egypt's demands of UNEF a series of emergency meetings was held by the Cabinet in Israel. There was great apprehension when head of Israeli military intelligence, Major General Aharon Yariv, reported to army headquarters, apparently mistakenly, that the Egyptian army was equipped with poison gas (Israel was unprepared for chemical warfare). [3]

"All Egypt is now prepared to plunge into total war which will put an end to Israel" - *Cairo Radio*

The NY Times reports that the PLO pledges to **"keep sending commandos"** into Israel

Evening: Israel called up more reserve units and sent them to the southern front to face Egypt's gathering forces. [9]

SUBJECT: Urgent Message to Eshkol: We had hoped yesterday that tension in the Israel-Syria-UAR triangle was dropping after an ostentatious Egyptian show of putting its forces around Cairo on alert. Last night, however, we and the Israelis learned that the Egyptians have moved forces into the Sinai. Now they have moved forces in front of the UN Emergency Force on the Israel-UAR border and all but ordered it to withdraw. - *Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson* [30 Doc 7]

[May 18th 1967](#)

"The Zionist barrack in Palestine is about to collapse and be destroyed. Every one of the hundred million Arabs has been living for the past nineteen years on one hope – to live to see the day Israel is liquidated...There is no life, no peace nor hope for the gangs of Zionism to remain in the occupied land."

"As of today, there no longer exists an international emergency force to protect Israel....The sole method we shall apply against Israel is a total war which will result in the extermination of Zionist existence". - *Cairo Radio's Voice of the Arabs broadcast*

An Egyptian MIG-21 made extensive photographic reconnaissance of possible targets in the central Negev. [10]

UN Secretary General U Thant was informed that Egyptian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Riad had called the ambassadors of the UNEF countries to his office in Cairo to declare that they must withdraw their troops immediately. The ambassadors, as with General Rikhye, were also not authorised to undertake such an action. - *U.N. A/6730/Add.3 26th June 1967*

Noon: Egyptian ambassador Kony informed U Thant **"Egypt has decided to terminate the presence of the United Nations Emergency Force from the territory of the United Arab Republic and Gaza Strip. Therefore I request that the necessary steps be taken for the withdrawal of the Force as soon as possible."** - *U.N. A/6730/Add.3 26th June 1967*

7pm: UN Secretary General U Thant sent cable to Cairo advising that UNEF would be

withdrawn. He added the rider: **“Irrespective of the reasons for the actions you have taken, in all frankness, may I advise you that I have serious misgivings about it for...I believe that this Force has been an important factor in maintaining the relative quiet in the area of its deployment during the past ten years and that its withdrawal may have grave implications for peace.”** - *Charles W Yost "How it Began", Foreign Affairs, Winter 1968*



The UK were deeply upset at the U Thant caving in without bringing the matter to the UN General Assembly:

“The presence of the Emergency Forces in the Sinai desert had kept tensions down. We don’t have to look further for a United Nations success. Yet the Government of the United Arab Republic has made a formal request for the withdrawal of UNEF from its territory as soon as possible. *U Thant*

It really makes a mockery of the peacekeeping work of the United Nations if, as soon as the tension rises, the United Nations force is told to leave. Indeed the collapse of UNEF might well have repercussions on other United Nations peacekeeping forces, and the credibility of the United Nations in this field are thrown into question.”

...”UNEF was established with the full concurrence of the United Nations...any decision to withdraw the force should be taken in the United Nations after full consultation with all the countries involved – it should not be taken as the result of some unilateral decision.” - *George Brown (British Foreign Secretary), speaking at United Nations Association annual dinner in London [21]*

TELEGRAM FROM PM ESHKOL TO PRES JOHNSON:(extract) "First: The primary link in the chain of tension is the Syrian policy of terrorist infiltration and sabotage. From Under Secretary Rostow's conversation with Ambassador Harman, I am glad to learn that your government and mine are agreed on this. You are correct, Mr. President, in stating that we are having our patience tried to the limits. There have been 15 attempts at murder and sabotage in the past six weeks. We have not reacted. This in itself proves that there is no lack of temperance and responsibility on our part. On the other hand, the problem is not solved indefinitely by inaction. We cannot always rely on the stroke of fortune which has so far prevented the terrorist acts from taking the toll of life and injury intended by the perpetrators. Although many acts have been committed from Lebanon and Jordan, our present conviction is that Syria is responsible and is attempting to embroil other Arab states. We are alive to this stratagem and shall not cooperate with it.

Second: The Egyptian build-up of armor and infantry in Sinai, to the extent so far of approximately four divisions including 600 tanks, is greater than ever before, and has no objective justification. Egypt knows that there is no foundation for reports of troop concentration against Syria. Yet even after receiving information on this subject from UN and other sources, the UAR has increased its troop concentration. This naturally forces me to undertake precautionary reinforcement in the south. One of the dangers that we face is that the Egyptian troop concentration may encourage Syria to resume terroristic acts under the false impression of immunity." [30 DOC 13]

[May 19th 1967](#)

"El Fatah activities consisting of terrorism and sabotage are a major factor in that they provoke strong reactions in Israel by the Government and population alike. Some recent incidents of this type have seemd to indicate a new level of organisation and training of those who participate in these actions." - UN Secretary General U Thant, Security Council meeting. [10]

“I do not want to cause alarm but it is difficult for me not to warn the Council that, as I see it, the position in the Middle East is more disturbing...indeed more menacing than at any time since the fall of 1956.” - *UN Secretary General U Thant, Security Council meeting - U.N. S/7906 26th May 1967*



A UNEF liaison officer says goodbye to the Israeli officer in charge of the Erez border checkpoint just prior to the removal of UNEF forces from Kings Gate. photo Bruner Ilan - Israel National Photo Collection

U Thant's decision was still provoking great unease within the UN, as reported by The Times: "Quite a few countries feel that the force should not have been withdrawn and virtually disbanded so suddenly at the behest of the United Arab Republic without allowing the United Nations General Assembly, which authorized its coming into existence, to discuss the matter...efforts (are) being made to see if some alternative basis for securing the Israel-Egyptian border...Most European and American countries and also a fair number of Asian and African countries, would welcome some such "salvage" operation. It would be resisted and rejected by the communist block, which has in the past consistently espoused the Arab case against Israel...Brazil and Canada (members of the Security Council) have contributed contingents to the Emergency Force (and) are believed to have argued against its withdrawal.

... In reporting to the General Assembly today U Thant made it clear that his hand was forced by recent troop movements by the Egyptian Army, which in effect put them in positions ahead of the Emergency Force observation posts." [\[22\]](#)

4pm: General Rikhye drove to the UN observation post on the Gaza-Tel Aviv road to deliver this message: **"In accordance with instructions I have received from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, you will withdraw your guards and observation posts at 5 o'clock."**

By this time there were an estimated 40 thousand Egyptian troops and 500 tanks in the Sinai. Israel ordered an immediate large-scale mobilization of reserves.[\[5\]](#)

"The Egyptian Army build-up in Sinai was described in Tel Aviv today as the largest force to be assembled for ten years" - *The Times* (illustrated by a large picture of "A column of Russian T34 tanks of the United Arab Republic halt for refuelling in the Sinai desert yesterday on their way to take up positions along the Egyptian-Israel border." [\[25\]](#)

Prime Minister Levi Eshkol sent a message to France's President de Gaulle assuring him that he could count on Israel not to initiate hostilities **"...until or unless (Egyptian forces) close the Straits of Tiran to free navigation by Israel"** [\[4\]](#)

Eshkol also advised the leading maritime powers: **"Israel would stop at nothing to cancel the blockade. It is essential that President Nasser should not have any illusions."**

"Our intention to regard the closing of the Straits as a *casus belli* was communicated...to the foreign ministers of those states which had supported international navigation in the Straits in 1957 and thereafter. There can be no doubt that these warnings reached Cairo. One thing was now clear. If Nasser

imposed a blockade, the explosion would ensue not from 'miscalculation', but from an open-eyed and conscious readiness for war." - *Abba Eban* [10]

[May 20th 1967](#)



"Our forces are now entirely ready no only to repulse any aggression, but to initiate the act ourselves, and to explode the Zionist presence in the Arab homeland of Palestine. The Syrian army, with its finger on the trigger, is united. I believe that the time has come to begin a battle of annihilation." - *Syria's Defence Minister Hafez Assad (later to be Syria's President).*

Hafez Assad

The Times reported: Egypt and Israel faced each other directly tonight as the United Nations Emergency Force, which had stood between them for more than ten years, began its official withdrawal.

...in Cairo... there was little consolation for the peacemakers in the announcement that all Egyptian preachers had been ordered to preach Jihad or holy war. The Ministry of Religious Affairs said congregations must be reminded of the honour of dying a martyr in a holy battle. [23]

There was distinct disappointment in Whitehall yesterday at what was felt to be the unduly unquestioning acceptance by U Thant of Egypt's request that the United Nations Emergency Force should be withdrawn. - *The Times, continuing to report on the UK's feelings about UN actions* [24]

[May 21st 1967](#)

The NY Times reported Egyptian soldiers massing in the Sinai.

[May 22nd 1967](#)

Egypt's President Nasser announced: "The Israeli flag shall not go through the Gulf of Aqaba. Our sovereignty over the entrance to the Gulf cannot be disputed".

The NY Times reported that the PLO would be stepping up its attacks in Israel, that Cairo was calling up 10,000 reserves and that Iraq would be sending aid for a battle against Israel.

"We want a full scale, popular war of liberation... to destroy the Zionist enemy" - *Syrian president Dr. Nureddin al-Attasi speech to troops* [6]

"Israel today proposed a mutual reduction in troop concentrations in the Middle East, while its Arab neighbours laid plans to strengthen still further their forces round her borders..." - *The Times* [26]

INTERNAL U.S. MEMORANDUM (probably never sent):

GAS MASKS FOR ISRAEL: Israel asked on 19 May to buy for cash on an urgent basis 20,000 US Army M-17 gas masks to be air shipped to Israel for immediate distribution. The US Army can make 20,000 masks available immediately from its stocks. These are being prepared for shipment and could be dispatched as quickly as the GOI can arrange air charter.

The Egyptians have used chemical agents, including nerve gas, in the Yemen recently. Israeli intelligence reports that Egypt has brought gas shells or bombs forward to the Sinai in its recent deployments. Although we believe it highly unlikely that Egypt would use gas against Israel, this possibility cannot be

altogether discounted.

Secretary Rusk is aware of and supports the Israeli request to purchase American masks, even though all concerned (including the Israelis) recognize that the number of masks involved is too small to do much good and that by themselves could not assure adequate protection against the type of gas which may be used. This would be essentially a psychological gesture.

- Memorandum From the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (Hoopes) to Secretary of Defense McNamara/1/ Doc 37[30]

[NOTE: See June 1st - Germany agreed to what was evidently the same request!]

[May 23rd 1967](#)

Egypt closed the Straits of Tiran (Gulf of Aqaba) to Israeli shipping, thereby cutting off Israel's only supply route with Asia and stopping the flow of oil from its main supplier, Iran. By international law, this was an act of war. (Reported that day in every newspaper in the world - see report in [The Times](#))

[Note: In January 1950, Egypt had recognised the international character of the Straits of Tiran, when it wrote to the American Embassy in Cairo: **"It goes without saying that this passage through the Straits of Tiran will remain free as in the past in conformity with international practice and with the recognised principle of international law"**. In 1957, 17 maritime powers had declared at the UN that Israel had a right to transit the Straits.]

By his reported decision to close the Straits of Tiran, President Nasser has struck at Israel in one of her most sensitive areas. Eilat is her gateway to the east and the vital supplies of oil.

...In the present atmosphere of tension, time is not on Israel's side. She has had to react to the situation by calling up a large number of reserves, but the economy, already ailing slightly, cannot afford for long to be bled of the highly qualified manpower which has been taken back into the army.

...The Arab armies can certainly afford to mass their armies on Israel's border for longer than Israel can remain at a high state of military readiness. There is a danger that pressure from within might oblige Israel to do something quickly rather than submit to the economic strangulation of a long period of unrelieved tension. -

Charles Douglas-Home, *The Times* p8 [23]

THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS: ...In the hour of crisis all Arabs stand shoulder to shoulder; troops mobilize and offers of help flash to and fro...But there is one element that is new and that justifies U Thant's extreme concern and hurried journey to Cairo. The disappearance of United Nations forces from the Sinai peninsula turns the Gulf of Aqaba back into what it was before 1956 - a bottleneck leading to Israel's only east-looking port, the entrance to which is now again commanded by Arab batteries. Israel has often said in the past that interference with shipping in the Gulf would be a *casus belli*; and late last night President Nasser was reported to have claimed to have closed it to Israeli vessels and any ships carrying strategic supplies to Israel. - Leader editorial (extract), *The Times* May 23rd 1967

9.30am: Israel's Ministerial Committee on Defence got underway, finally unanimously passing a policy statement:

- 1. The blockade is an act of aggression against Israel**
- 2. Any decision on action is postponed for 48 hours, during which time the Foreign minister will explore the position of the United States.**
- 3. The Prime Minister and the Foreign minister are empowered to decide, should they see fit, on a journey by the Foreign minister to Washington to meet President Johnson.**

Housewives, who had displayed restraint up until then, stormed the grocery stores, stocking up on canned goods, flour, oil and sugar in preparation for a long war. Thousands of Israelis paid their taxes and others donated cash and jewellery to the Defence Ministry to provide extra funds to purchase weapons.

Neighbourhood groups formed on their own to build bomb shelters, dig trenches and volunteer for essential services.

The nation's mobilisation was by now far advanced and the newspapers were filled with columns of cancelled meetings and postponed weddings "because of the situation". Old men and women now drove the public buses since the young drivers had been called up. Thousands of Israeli mothers baked cakes and tarts and sent them off to the Negev so their fighters would have something fresh to eat apart from combat rations. Civilians appeared in the outposts handing out cigarettes, soft drinks and magazines.

Israelis were digging in, getting ready for war. [\[7\]](#)

Mobilisation started with phone calls to the commanders of the most important units. One of them, a lawyer in civilian life, reported for duty with his private secretary and driver and 'within ninety minutes was busy getting his brigade out of the card index and into the field'. The message passed down the line to officers who called NCOs, who called soldiers. Other units were called up by code words that were broadcast on the radio.

.....
In a couple of days, most Israeli men under fifty were in some sort of uniform. Some units had a turnout of more than 100 per cent. Overage men arrived at their unit's mobilisation points and demanded to be allowed to fight. One persistent 63-year-old, a veteran of the British army, was told his unit would only take him back if he brought a jeep. the next day he turned up with one from Hertz. [\[8\]](#)

President Johnson tonight condemned the Arab blockade of Israel shipping in the Gulf of Aqaba as **"illegal and potentially disastrous to the cause of peace"..."The purported closing of the Gulf of Aqaba has brought a new and grave dimension to the crisis. The United States considers the gulf to be an international waterway."**...Mr Johnson condemned the "hurried withdrawal" of the United Nations emergency force from Gaza and Sinai, and the "recent build-up of military forces in the area". - [Times May 24th 1967 full text here](#)

[May 24th 1967](#)



Abba Eban

Israel's foreign minister Abba Eban met with UK Prime Minister Harold Wilson at 10 Downing Street. Wilson revealed that the Cabinet had met that morning and concluded that Egypt's blockade **"must not be allowed to triumph; Britain would join with others in an effort to open the Straits."**

"The British radio and television, which I turned on briefly before retiring, were full of sympathy for Israel, but they had a distinctly funereal air." - Abba Eban noted in his diary, on returning to his hotel, that evening. [\[10\]](#)

[May 26th 1967](#)

"Taking over Sharm el Sheikh meant confrontation with Israel (and) also meant that we were ready to enter a general war with Israel. The battle will be a general one and our basic objective will be to destroy Israel" - Gamal Abdel Nasser speech to the General Council of the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions

- broadcast in Arabic by Cairo Radio's Voice of the Arabs, Gamal Abdel Nasser, 19.35 GMT, 26th May 1967 (the speech made front page news in The Times May 27th) [Full text here](#)

Egypt's government sponsored daily paper Al Ahram carried an article by Mohamed Heikal (a close friend of

Nasser's). He wrote that closing the Straits of Tiran **“had put Israel in a situation where it had to react...for many reasons, chiefly the psychological, Israel cannot accept or remain indifferent to what has taken place...Israel has to reply now. It has to deal a blow...Then it will be our turn to deal a second blow, which we will deliver with the utmost possible effectiveness...Let Israel begin! Let our second blow then be ready! Let it be a knockout!”** [11] *Appendix 5*

Eban opened the discussion by saying the Cabinet meeting on Sunday was very important; **there has never been a moment like this in Israeli history; and the country is on the footing of expectancy. If Israel is denied access to the Gulf of Aqaba, its primary line to East Africa and Asia--half of the world--would be cut off. From a legal point of view, the Law of the Sea Conference in 1958 clearly supported the principle of freedom of the seas as applied to Gulf of Aqaba and Strait of Tiran. Nasser has committed an act of aggression and his objective is the strangulation of Israel. Israel is confronted with two alternatives: either to surrender or to stand, and we are confident if we stand we will win.** - *Memorandum of discussion between Abba Eban and President Johnson in Washington* [30 Doc 77]

The head of the Mercaz Harav Kook Yeshiva (an academy for the advanced study of Jewish texts) issued a ruling for his students being called up by the Military Police that **"despite the Sabbath, they should board the trucks and go. They should board tanks and violate the prohibition against touching their tefillin (phylacteries) on Sabbath and take them with them when they go to join their units. ...in a national emergency, Army service falls into the category of "pikuach nefesh" (the saving of a life).**" [32]

UK: The Chief Rabbi, the Haham and the chairman of Liberal / Progressive synagogues asked for special prayers for peace for Israel to be recited in synagogues throughout the country. [32]

Scores of non-Jewish Germans, including nurses and ex-soldiers had contacted the Israeli Embassy volunteer their services or to raise funds, according to the Jewish Chronicle correspondent in Bonn. [32]

[May 27th 1967](#)

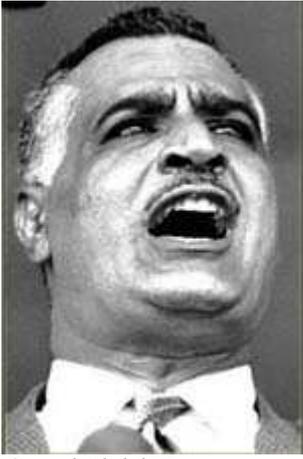
However, Israelis took (the) occasion (to) embark on (an) emotional, evidently sincere, exposition (of) their thesis that evidence available to them (was) conclusive that Nasser has "crossed his Rubicon" and surprise aerial attack (was) expected any moment. My remonstrances that our most careful and equally authoritative assessment is to contrary were met by argument we (were) behind (the) times and essential intelligence (in) this regard had been received in last few hours. They talked in terms of surprise air strike knocking out Israeli airfields and rendering their response ineffective. They said they had intercepts of Egyptian messages to confirm situation as they see it. Also frightened by fact four MIGs overflew Israel yesterday and Israeli Airforce (were) not able intercept. - *(extract) Telegram From the US Embassy in Israel to the US Department of State* [30 Doc 82]

Nasser cancels a planned Egyptian attack on Israel (Operation fajr - Dawn), planned for following day, after it became obvious that the Israelis knew about the plan.

The NY Times reported that Jordan would admit Saudi and Iraqi forces into its country to do battle with Israel

[May 28th 1967](#)

“The existence of Israel is in itself an aggression...what happened in 1948 was an aggression – an aggression against the Palestinian people. ... (the crisis had developed because) “Eshkol threatened to march on Damascus, occupy Syria and overthrow the Syrian regime. It was our duty to come to the aid of our Arab brother. It was our duty to ask for the withdrawal of UNEF. When UNEF went, we had to go to the Gulf of Aqaba and restore things to what they were when we were in Aqaba in 1956” - *Gamel Abdel Nasser at a press conference for several hundred of the World's press.* [9]



“We will not accept any...coexistence with Israel....Today the issue is not the establishment of peace between the Arab states and Israel....The war with Israel is in effect since 1948”. - Gamal Abdel Nasser press conference

[May 29th 1967](#)

“Now, eleven years after 1956 we are restoring things to what they were in 1956... The issue now at hand is not the Gulf of Aqaba, the Straits of Tiran or the withdrawal of UNEF, but the rights of the Palestinian people.” - Nasser speech to General Assembly in Cairo:

- Vance, Vick, and Pierre Lauer: *Hussein of Jordan*. London: Peter Owen, 1968

Gamal Abdel Nasser

Abba Eban in his memoirs later commented Nasser’s speech **“took the conflict far back beyond the maritime context to place the question mark squarely on Israel’s survival.”** [10]

NY Times reports continuing Egyptian build up of military forces in the Sinai and new Syrian attacks on Israel. Washington Post reports that despite considerable provocation, Israel was still reluctant to have a showdown with its enemies

[May 30th 1967](#)



Jordan signed a five year mutual defense treaty with Egypt, thereby joining the military alliance already in place between Egypt and Syria. Jordanian forces were given to the command of an Egyptian General.

"The armies of Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon are poised on the borders of Israel ... to face the challenge, while standing behind us are the armies of Iraq, Algeria, Kuwait, Sudan and the whole Arab nation.

[Hussein of Jordan and Nasser of Egypt sign defense treaty](#)

This act will astound the world. Today they will know that the Arabs are arranged for battle, the critical hour has arrived. We have reached the stage of serious action and not of more declarations." - Gamal Abdel Nasser speech

Israel called upon Jordan numerous times to refrain from hostilities. Hussein, however, was caught on the horns of a galling dilemma: allow Jordan to be dragged into war and face the brunt of the Israeli response, or remain neutral and risk full-scale insurrection among his own people. Army Commander-in-Chief General Sharif Zaid Ben Shaker warned in a press conference that **"If Jordan does not join the war a civil war will erupt in Jordan"**. [13]

[May 31st 1967](#)

“The existence of Israel is an error which must be rectified. This is our opportunity to wipe out the ignominy which has been with us since 1948. Our goal is clear - to wipe Israel off the map” - President Aref of Iraq

“Under the terms of the military agreement signed with Jordan, Jordanian artillery, coordinated with the forces of Egypt and Syria, is in a position to cut Israel in two at Qalqilya, where Israeli territory between the Jordan armistice line and the Mediterranean Sea is only 12 kilometres wide”. - *Al Akhbar*, Cairo's daily newspaper

(NB, the newspaper referred to the "armistice line", not the "border" which is now claimed by the Palestinians to be a legal boundary).

...Dr Ibrahim Makhos, the Syrian Foreign Minister, left for Paris today with a message for General de Gaulle which was officially described as dealing with "**Anglo-American-Zionist plans for widespread aggression against the Arab people**" - *The Times* [27]

UK PARLIAMENT DEBATED THE CRISIS:

"Time is not on the side of peace", said Mr Wilson solemnly several times tonight.

Everybody agreed it was a great pity that the Secretary-General had removed the United Nations force so hurriedly from the danger area.

"Taking the fire brigade away just when fire was about to burst out", the Foreign Secretary (George Brown) called it, **"Entirely incomprehensible"** agreed Mr Heath. **"fatal and perhaps fateful error of judgment"** was Sir Alec Douglas-Home's phrase; this was the last chance for the United Nations **"to get a grip on themselves and apply the principles of their Charter"**

Sir Alec Douglas-Home: **"...the first casualty (of this crisis) had been the United Nations. It would need an immense effort, an almost superhuman effort, to restore the prestige of that organization"**

Sir Barnett Janner: **"...they could not expect the people of Israel, who have done nothing wrong, to sit for a prolonged period until the pincer movement had got them so entrapped that they could not go on."**

Harold Wilson (Prime Minister): **"The characteristic of this situation is the declared aim of one side not to win concessions from the other. Their demand is that Israel should cease to exist - indeed has never existed. ...What had to be sought was not merely how to avoid war but to create the conditions of peace. One condition of a lasting peace must be the recognition that Israel has a right to live. Israel had been for nearly 20 years a member of the United Nations entitled to the respect and protection of the United Nations."** - *The Times* [27]

[June 1st 1967](#)

"Brethren and sons, this is the day of the battle to avenge our martyred brethren who fell in 1948. It is the day to wash away the stigma. We shall, God willing, meet in Tel Aviv and Haifa" - Radio broadcast by Iraqi President Abdel Rahman Aref

- 11.00 GMT June 1st 1967, Baghdad Domestic Service in Arabic , Foreign Broadcast Information Service

"Those who survive will remain in Palestine. I estimate that none of them will survive." - [Ahmed Shukairy*](#) (see note below), chairman of PLO in Jordanian Jerusalem, asked in news interview what will happen to the Israelis if there is a war [1]

Levi Eshkol, Prime Minister of Israel, sent message to Russian Premier Kosygin: **"When the organs of Arab propaganda raised the contention that Israel is concentrating forces in order to attack Syria, I invited your Ambassador in Israel to visit the frontier to find out for himself that there was no truth in this allegation. To my regret, the Ambassador did not respond to our invitation. The Chief of Staff of the UNTSO checked these claims and informed the Secretary-General of the UN and the capitals of the region that there were no Israel concentrations on the Syrian border. The Secretary-General even included a statement to this effect in the Report he submitted on May 19th to the Security Council."** [17]

GERMANY TO SEND GAS MASKS, Bonn: The German Cabinet decided unanimously tonight to agree to Israel's request for 20,000 gas masks for use in case of an Arab attack. A spokesman said it was "a humanitarian measure", not a delivery of war material to the Middle East [28, p7]

[June 2nd 1967](#)

US BACKS BRITAIN ON SEA PASSAGE RIGHTS: "The United States is backing the initiative taken by Britain to rally support by maritime powers to keep the Gulf of Aqaba open to the world's shipping, the State Department spokesman said in Washington yesterday" - *The Times* [28]

MOVE TO JERUSALEM BY PALESTINE LEADER: ... [Ahmed Shukairy](#): **"We will coordinate efforts of the PLO with responsible authorities in Jordan in all fields – politically, militarily and materially..."** Mr Shukairy seemed determined that the war should come soon. **"It was", he said, "very probable that the Jordan army might start the battle."** It is doubtful whether his new allies would agree with this. [28, p7] - *The Times, Nicholas Herbert, Amman, June 1st*

To create the illusion that war was not near Gen Moshe Dayan had thousands of soldiers released for the weekend.

Their appearance back at their homes and on beaches and in café's seemed to confirm that tensions were relaxing. Some reporters gave up their vigil and left Israel in search of more pressing stories. [9]



Moshe Dayan

A CHURCHILL GIVES HIS BLOOD: Winston S. Churchill, the son of Mr. Randolph Churchill and grandson of Sir Winston Churchill, who is covering events in Israel for the "News of the World," joined a queue of civilians waiting at Dizengoff Circle on Sunday to donate blood for the emergency blood banks which have been established in the city.

Seventy tourists from Britain also donated blood before leaving for home.

Civil defence preparations are being pushed forward. In Tel Aviv, 12,000 volunteers, including school children, joined in digging trenches and filling sandbags. [29]

In the UK **"500 volunteers, including 100 non-Jews w(ill) be leaving London shortly to take over civilian jobs in Israel left vacant by Israelis called up for armed service,** reported *The Jewish Chronicle*. **In Stockholm between 200 and 250 Swedes are ready to leave for Israel, including, it is reported, some former members of the Swedish contingent with the United Nations Emergency Force in the Gaza Strip."** Elsewhere in the *Jewish Chronicle* there was a full page advertisement headed **"EMERGENCY APPEAL TO BRITISH JEWS"**, with the signatories including Britain's Chief Rabbi and Haham. The text included: **"Israel is in mortal danger; she stands encircled by enemies who declare their intent to destroy her. This is an appeal to every Jew in the country...to stand by the people of Israel. The Jews of Israel are ready to pay for their country with their lives; the Jews of Britain must show that they are ready to make a sacrifice too."** [29]

"Pupils at Carmel College responded to an emergency appeal for Israel and raised a considerable sum of money. They have unanimously asked the school authorities to give them bread and water for at least one meal so that the money could be devoted to Israel" [29]

[June 3rd 1967](#)

The New York Times reported that Britain declared the Egyptian blockade could lead to war. They further reported that four Syrian commandos had been intercepted in Israel

MILITARY BUILD-UP: By this time Egypt had 210,000 troops ready for deployment, with 100,000 of them with 930 tanks ready in the Sinai. They had 30 Tu-16 Russian-made bombers, which were a threat to Israel's cities. Overall the Egyptian Air Force, by far the largest and the most modern of all the Arab air forces, consisting of about 450 combat aircraft, all Soviet-built and relatively new.

Syria had 63,000 troops and Jordan 55,000 – totalling 328,000 troops ready to fight Israel.

The Arabs had twice the number of tanks compared to Israel (2,330 against 1000) and far more combat aircraft too (682 compared to Israel's 286); They had 1,845 armoured personnel carriers compared to Israel's 1,500.

However, by fully mobilizing Israel could muster 250,000 men. Israel would need to rely on the training and motivation of this largely civilian army to counter the numeric superiority of the Arabs in manpower and weaponry. [15]

Israel's newly-appointed Defence Minister Moshe Dayan, wishing to confine hostilities if possible to the imminent battles against Egypt, ordered the Israeli Army not to open a second front with Jordan in the West Bank in the event of war. He instructed the head of the Israeli Army Central Command: "You must not do anything to entangle Israel with the Jordanians..." [6]

[June 4th 1967](#)

Secret resolution passed by the Israeli Cabinet:

After hearing a report on the military and political situation from the Prime Minister, the Foreign minister, the Defence Minister, the Chief of Staff and the head of military intelligence the Government ascertained that the armies of Egypt, Syria and Jordan are deployed for immediate multifront aggression, threatening the very existence of the State.

The Government resolves to take military action in order to liberate Israel from the stranglehold of aggression which is progressively being tightened around Israel.

The Government authorises the Prime Minister and the Defence Minister to confirm to the General Staff of the IDF the time for action.

Members of the Cabinet will receive as soon as possible the information concerning the military operation to be carried out.

The Government charges the Foreign Minister with the task of exhausting all possibilities of political action in order to explain Israel's stand and to obtain the support of the powers. [10]



King Husain of Jordan today warned Britain and the United States that they stood to lose their friends in the Arab world for ever if they fell into the Zionist trap of supporting Israel in the present crisis.

"There are no words I can use to express my disappointment at the attitude that the British Government has taken with regard to the Gulf of Aqaba", he told a crowded press conference at his palace in Amman. - *The Times*, June 5th 1967 p4, Nicholas Herbert, Amman
"WARNING TO BRITAIN BY KING HUSAIN: Danger of losing Arab friends"

King Husain
(48488 UN/DPI Photo)

[June 5th 1967](#)

MILITARY BUILD-UP: Seven to eight Egyptian division, two of them armoured, now deployed in Sinai: 200 tanks opposite Eilat, with the aim of cutting off the Southern Negev. Along Israel's Eastern border: 60,000 Jordanian soldiers and 300 tanks. The Jordanian army placed under Egyptian command units, as well as Iraq forces which had entered its territory. On Israel's Northern border with Syria, 50,000 Syrian soldiers dug in, fortified and protected by concrete and steel. Some 600 Egyptian, Jordanian, Syrian and Iraqi planes ready.

War broke out on 5 June when Israel responded to the Egyptian military build-up by launching a surprise attack on Egypt's air force, destroying most of it on the ground within a matter of hours.

That same morning, Israel sent a message to Jordan's leader King Hussein via the US State Department, the

UN and the British Foreign Office, saying that, despite the outbreak of war, it would not attack the West Bank if Jordan maintained quiet on that front.

Jordan ignored Israel's appeal to avoid conflict.

That morning, King Hussein received false information from Egypt denying Egyptian losses and claiming a massive and successful Egyptian attack against Israel. Emboldened by this information, Jordan launched immediate multiple attacks on Israel:-

- civilian suburbs of Tel-Aviv were shelled by artillery;
- Israel's largest military airfield, Ramat David, was shelled;
- Jordanian warplanes attacked the central Israeli towns of Netanya and Kfar Sava;
- thousands of mortar shells rained down on West Jerusalem hitting civilian locations indiscriminately, including the Hadassah Hospital and the Mount Zion Church;
- Israel's parliament building (the Knesset) and the Prime Minister's office, each in Israeli-controlled West Jerusalem, were targeted;
- 20 Israelis died in these attacks; 1000 were wounded. 900 buildings in West Jerusalem were damaged.
- "Jerusalem is totally engulfed in war..." reported the British Consul-General that morning.
- All this happened before Israel reacted militarily against Jordan, or moved at all into the West Bank.

NOTE: Israel's entry into the West Bank in June 1967 was not part of a premeditated Israeli plan for territorial expansion. Quite the opposite: Israel's own Defence Minister instructed the army not to fight the Jordanians, or move into the West Bank. That position only changed as a result of Jordan's disregard for Israeli appeals to avoid hostilities, and by its intensive bombardment of Israeli targets. Israel's entry into the West Bank was an act of self-defence. Its presence there originates as a result, not of Israeli aggression, but of Jordanian aggression. [16]

10,000 at Albert Hall Rally About 10,000 people filled the Albert Hall last night for a demonstration of solidarity with Israel. They heard speeches from members of the three main British parliamentary parties, from Dr. Immanuel Jakobovits, the Chief Rabbi, from Sir Barnet Janner, MP, president of the Zionist Federation, and from Mr. Donald Silk, chairman of the federation, which organized the rally. - *The Times*

[June 6th 1967](#)

Abba Eban, Israel's Foreign Minister addresses UN Security Council: **"I have just come from Jerusalem to tell the Security Council that Israel, by its independent effort and sacrifice, has passed from serious danger to successful resistance.**

Two days ago Israel's condition caused much concern across the humane and friendly world. Israel had reached a sombre hour. Let me try to evoke the point at which our fortunes stood.

An army, greater than any force ever assembled in history in Sinai, had massed against Israel's southern frontier. Egypt had dismissed the United Nations forces which symbolized the international interest in the maintenance of peace in our region. Nasser had provocatively brought five infantry divisions and two armoured divisions up to our very gates; 80,000 men and 900 tanks were poised to move." [full text here](#)

The Times features report: [How the Arabs rallied to the support of Egypt](#) (click for text)

[June 14th 1967](#)

Abba Eban TV broadcast:

"Wars are not always begun by shots. They are often begun by action and the action which really created the state of war in an acute sense was the imposition of the blockade. To try to murder somebody

by strangulation is just as much attempted murder as if you tried to murder him by a shot, and therefore the act of strangulation was the first violent, physical act which had its part in the sequence. But also on that Monday morning we acted against the movement of forces. The Egyptian air force had been making incursions into Israel before, whether for reconnaissance or for other reasons, but there had been a pattern of encroachment. One never knows when aircraft come towards you what their intention is.

A document which we subsequently captured revealed a very instructive picture. The Egyptian command was taking a very intense interest in the disposition of Israel's very few airfields. They wanted to know where they were, and there was an operation plan, which I read to the Security Council, about how to knock them out. My impression is, therefore, that those aircraft which appeared on our radar screens that Monday morning were the start of an operation against our air fields. Whether they were to make the first reconnaissance move or the first knock-out is not relevant in this era of war. But we acted against movement towards us in the air." [18]

[June 19th 1967](#)

US President Lyndon Johnson declared: **"If a single act of folly was more responsible for this explosion than any other it was the arbitrary and dangerous announced decision that the Straits of Tiran would be closed. The right of innocent, maritime passage must be preserved for all nations".**

[Sept 1st 1967](#)

Eight Arab heads of state attended an Arab summit conference in Khartoum during August 29 September 1, 1967, formulating what became known as the [Khartoum Resolutions](#). They called for the continued struggle against Israel, the creation of a fund to assist the economics of Egypt and Jordan, the lifting of an Arab oil boycott against the West and a new agreement to end the war in Yemen. By adopting the dictum of no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel and no negotiations with Israel, the Arab states appeared to have slammed the door on any progress towards peace. The Resolutions became known as the "three noes".

*NOTE: **AHMED SHUKEIRY** - formerly an aide to the late Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini. The Mufti notoriously sought friendship with Hitler during World War 2, requesting: **" ... to settle the question of Jewish elements in Palestine and other Arab countries in accordance with the national and racial interests of the Arabs and along the lines similar to those used to solve the Jewish question in Germany and Italy."** He got as far as planning a concentration camp, near Tel Aviv. He was also responsible for recruiting Balkan Muslims for infamous SS "mountain divisions" that tried to wipe out Jewish communities throughout the region.[\[19\]](#)]

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