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**DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE**

# Intelligence Memorandum

*Military Capabilities of Israel and the Arab States*

DIA review(s)  
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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Directorate of Intelligence  
26 May 1967

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Military Capabilities of Israel  
and the Arab States

Summary

Israel could almost certainly attain air superiority over the Sinai Peninsula in 24 hours after taking the initiative or in two or three days if the UAR struck first. In the latter case, Israel might lose up to half of its air force. We estimate that armored striking forces could breach the UAR's double defense line in the Sinai within several days. Regrouping and resupplying would be required before the Israelis could initiate further attacks aimed at driving to the Suez Canal. Israel could contain any attacks by Syria or Jordan during this period.

Note: This memorandum was prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency in collaboration with the Defense Intelligence Agency. Within CIA it was coordinated with the Office of National Estimates, the Office of Current Intelligence, and the Office of Research and Reports.

[REDACTED]

Discussion

I. General Assessment

1. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) are at a numerical disadvantage to the combined strength of Israel's Arab neighbors in terms of aircraft, armor, artillery, naval vessels, and manpower. Nonetheless, the IDF maintain qualitative superiority over the Arab armed forces in almost all aspects of combat operations. The high quality of training and maintenance, the degree of operational proficiency, and the important, but intangible, morale factor give the advantage to the IDF, which operates through a single command structure and over interior lines of communication.

2. In contrast, the Arab states are hampered by a lack of cohesiveness and by friction among Arab leaders. The United Arab Command (UAC), even at the present state of alert, is ineffective either as a command or a coordinating structure. Only the UAR, Syria, and Iraq are coordinating military activity to any extent. Jordan, with limited offensive strength, is reluctant to become heavily engaged. Iraqi participation is limited by distance and internal security needs. Lebanon has no offensive capability. The principal Arab military strength lies with the UAR, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Though field experience acquired by Egyptian forces in Yemen has improved their over-all military capabilities, the presence of some 35,000 UAR troops in Yemen and limited reserves at home restrict the additional forces available for use against Israel.

II. Air Power

3. In the event of initiation of all-out hostilities by either side, the initial phase would involve an attempt to gain air supremacy. Israel has 256 operationally assigned jet fighters [REDACTED] Egypt, with the largest and most capable Arab air force, has 239 operationally

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assigned jet fighters primarily MIG-17s and MIG-21s,

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In addition, the UAR has 70 operational jet bombers

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The air forces of the other Arab states are considerably weaker: Syria has 58 jet fighters, but we estimate that only one MIG-17 squadron is operationally ready; Jordan has only 18 jet fighters and Lebanon, 12. Iraq has 22 jet bombers, but its fighters cannot operate against Israel from Iraqi bases.


4. Israeli strategy requires it to obtain and hold air superiority over its own territory, Sinai, and the border regions of Jordan and Syria. With only five bases for its aircraft, Israel relies on hardened revetments for aircraft, an effective Hawk missile system, and a high state of aircraft readiness to keep damage from an Arab air offensive within tolerable limits.

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5. Whether air action was Israeli-initiated or in response to UAR planes in the air, Israel would almost certainly be able to do heavy damage to Egyptian airbases in Sinai and the Suez Canal area and to inflict some damage on many of the supporting bases in the UAR proper. The UAR has only limited conventional anti-aircraft defenses to defend its four fighter bases in Sinai. Its SA-2 sites, defending key military installations in the Suez Canal and Cairo areas, would probably be of limited effectiveness. It seems almost certain that Israel could achieve air superiority over Sinai in 24 hours if it took the initiative. This time would probably double or even treble if Israel were forced to react to UAR planes in the air. The total cost to Israel would be high, perhaps as much as half of its fighter force in the latter case. We believe that Israeli intelligence capabilities and high alert status would preclude a surprise UAR attack catching the Israeli Air Force on the ground. During the hostilities with the UAR, Israel would be able to maintain air supremacy over its own territory and the adjacent areas of Jordan and Syria.

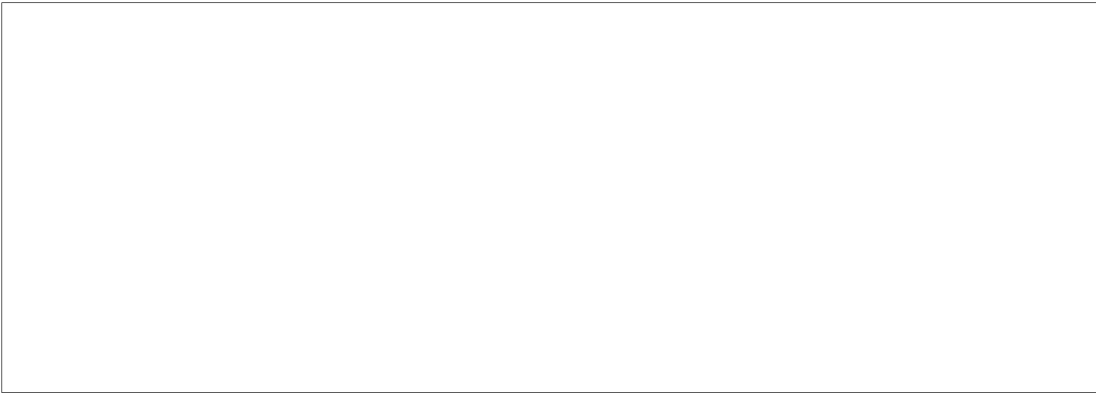
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### III. Ground Forces

6. The Israeli Army has an average peacetime strength of about 55,000; about 158,000 are now mobilized. Israel relies on extensive reserve training and an effective mobilization system to bring this to a maximum of 280,000. The army is organized in brigades of about 4,000 men each; these units are grouped in task forces for specific operations. The heart of the Israeli striking capability is contained in its force of about 1,000 tanks. These are equal in number to those of the UAR, and at least as heavily gunned and better maintained.



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8. Acquisition of large amounts of Soviet equipment, improved training and maneuvers, and above all the experience of nearly five years of field operations in Yemen have improved UAR ground forces considerably since the debacle of 1956. The Egyptians are capable of putting up a dogged and fairly effective defense; their weaknesses are insufficient flexibility and poor capacity for improvisation in a changing situation. We believe they would give a far better account of themselves defending against an Israeli assault than in mounting an offensive.

9. Israeli strategy in a conflict with the UAR is designed to cut around and through Egyptian defenses with armored striking forces. Israel presently has five armored/mechanized and four infantry brigades as well as other combat units for a strength of over 60,000 deployed in the Negev.

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We estimate that the Israelis, with air support, would be able to break through the first and second UAR defensive lines within several days. Regrouping and resupplying would probably be required at this point before Israel could initiate further attacks aimed at driving to the canal. The Israelis would take significant losses in such a campaign; casualties would probably run well into the thousands.

10. As for Jordan and Syria, the Israelis have already deployed forces sufficient to contain any attack. The faction-ridden, poorly trained, but stubborn Syrian Army would be unable to force a crossing of the Jordan River. Two Israeli brigades with antitank elements would hold them. Should the Israelis choose to attack, a five brigade force would be sufficient to break the Syrian line, though the casualties would be heavy in view of the terrain and heavy Syrian fortifications. If Jordan decided to fight on anything more than a pro forma scale, it would have to move its armored units to the West Bank of the Jordan River. They could be contained, and once major fighting with the UAR subsided, Israel could occupy most of the West Bank in a few days.

#### IV. Naval Forces

11. The UAR, with six destroyers, 12 submarines, and 18 missile patrol boats, has a far larger navy than Israel with its two destroyers and two submarines. Poor maintenance, insufficient time spent at sea, and inadequate training, however, make individual Egyptian ships about 80 percent as effective as Israeli vessels. The Israelis plan to deal with UAR naval forces primarily from the air. They probably are resigned to receiving some damage from the sea in the first few days, but could drive the Egyptian Navy off once they achieved air superiority.

#### V. Advanced Weapons

12. These weapons are likely to be more of psychological than strictly military importance. Neither side has surface-to-surface missiles deployed, though the Egyptians might be able to fire a few of

[redacted]

their missiles currently under development. [redacted]

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[redacted]

We have no information on the size of the UAR's stocks, nor of the scale of its delivery capability. If, as we believe, the UAR were to suffer serious aircraft losses, it could not mount a major aerial chemical attack after the first few days of combat. On their side, the Israelis have taken protective measures, and probably have some offensive CW capability themselves.

#### VI. The Logistical Element

13. Israel customarily maintains a supply of POL adequate for 90 days of peacetime use. At a time of high mobilization, military requirements would go up sharply (civilian requirements would fall as the economy slowed somewhat) but, at the worst, Israel would have 30 days of wartime requirements. [redacted]

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[redacted]

The Israelis produce most of their own ammunition and have long been aware of the necessity of not being caught short in this respect. We estimate that they have a minimum of 20-30 days combat munitions, and that they would have little difficulty in keeping their units supplied in battle.

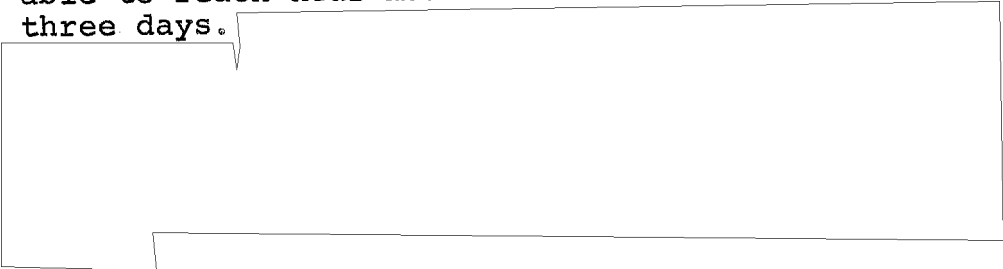
14. The UAR is also well supplied with munitions. In Yemen, it has demonstrated that it can feed and arm a force of up to 60,000 men at the end of a thousand-mile supply line. We estimate that the UAR has up to 30 days of ammunition. In combat, however, and particularly once Israel gained air superiority, supplying units in the Sinai would probably become a serious problem, although this situation might take a week or more to become critical.

15. The above discussion is in terms of the present state of high readiness on both Arab and Israeli sides. In periods of lesser tension the





advantage lies more strongly with Israel. It is able to reach near maximum mobilization in two or three days.



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Israel and Arab Neighbors

## Selected Armaments and Forces

	<u>UAR</u>	<u>Syria</u>	<u>Jordan</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Israel</u>
Ground Forces Prior to Mobilization	175,000	60,000	49,500	284,500	55,000
Total M+15	200,000	79,800	62,400	342,200	280,000
Tanks	1,007	482	287	1,776	1,123
SP Antitank/ Assault Guns	200	150	38	388	274

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