

ARAB STATES - ISRAEL: Except for a few scattered exchanges near Suez city, which is still in Egyptian hands, both the Egyptian and Syrian fronts were relatively calm again yesterday.

The Israelis claim to have shot down two Egyptian helicopters over the Gulf of Suez as they attempted to reach the Third Army at dawn; a third helicopter apparently made it through. A UN convoy of 24 trucks passed through Israeli lines and reached besieged Egyptian units in Suez city at about mid-day. The Syrian front was quiet.

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Radio Jerusalem announced that Israeli and Egyptian officers would meet again today mainly to discuss an exchange of POWs. The public mood in Israel reportedly has begun to harden on the POW issue. The government has been stung by opposition critics in the Knesset who have accused it of giving in to US pressure to permit relief of the Egyptian Third Army while obtaining nothing in return. Several influential Israeli contacts have told US officials in Tel Aviv that the Israeli Government will not agree to anything else until the US persuades Cairo and Moscow to make some tangible concessions on the POWs. Tel Aviv also wants the alleged Arab blockade of the Straits of Bab el Mandeb at the southern tip of the Gulf of Suez lifted, according to these sources.

Syrian President Asad told his nation yesterday that the cease-fire had taken him by surprise, but that he had agreed to accept it after the Soviets and President Sadat gave him guarantees that Israel would withdraw completely from all occupied Arab territory. Asad acclaimed the cease-fire as a victory for the Arab side, but threatened to renew the fighting if Syria did not obtain its objectives by negotiations.

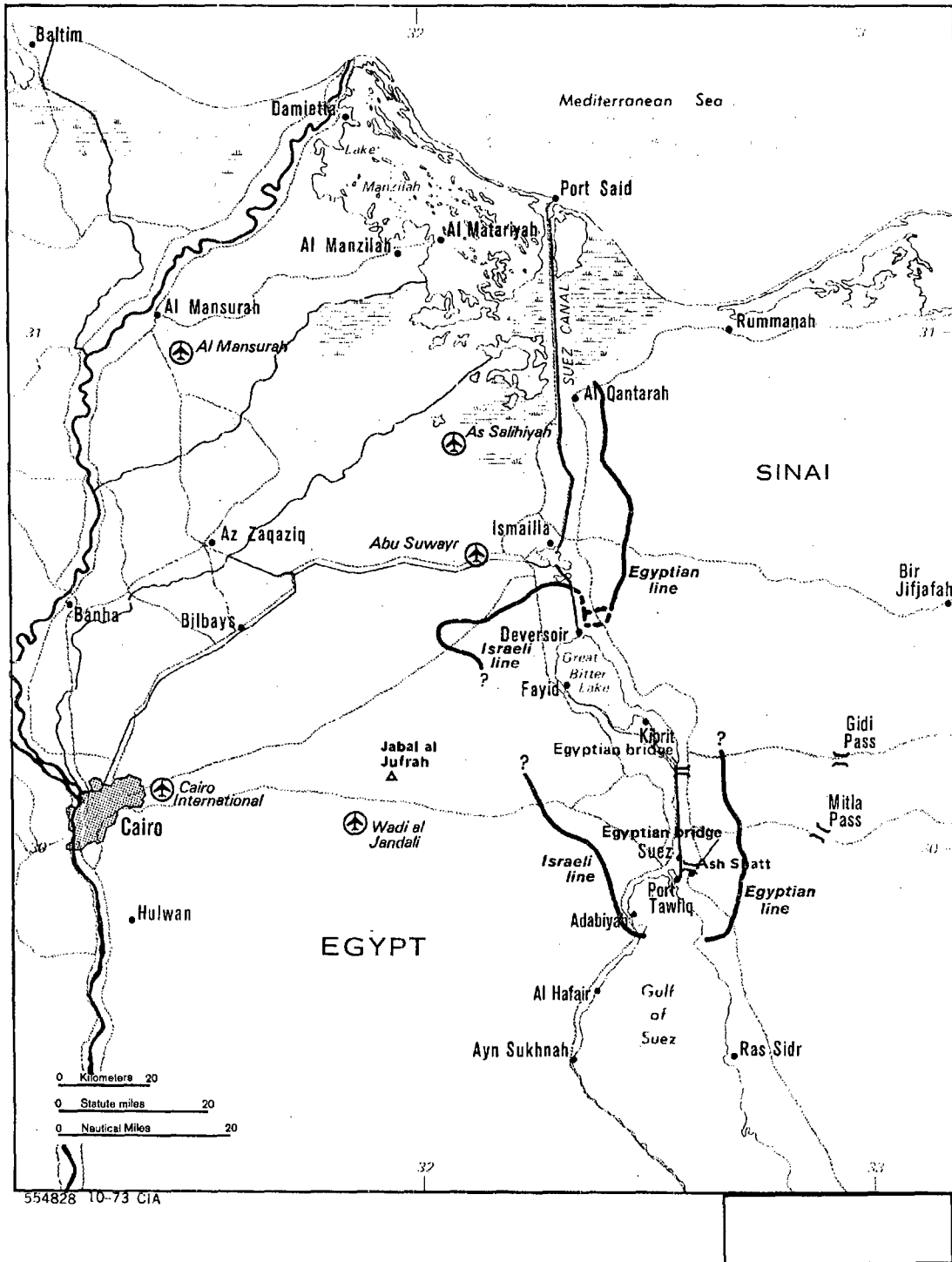
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Suez Canal Zone



The Syrian President made several oblique references to internal opposition, warning that a split in Syria's ranks would endanger the country's diplomatic and military gains.

At the UN, Secretary General Waldheim is running into difficulties assembling a 7,000-man international force. The 585 peacekeeping troops now in the Middle East have been drawn from the UN force on Cyprus and are being paid out of the Cyprus peacekeeping fund. Numerous states have offered troops, but most of them have been rejected either because they belong to the Warsaw Pact or NATO, or because they do not have diplomatic relations with Israel. Waldheim, therefore, will have to organize a force made up of a patchquilt of small states such as Panama, Finland, and Indonesia, which will be a time-consuming job. One important obstacle to funding the force was overcome last night when the Soviet Union agreed to help pay for the operation as long as it is kept under tight Security Council control.

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