

## THE JUNE 1967 AND OCTOBER 1973 ARAB-ISRAELI WARS

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**T**he June 1967 and October 1973 Arab-Israeli wars offer a vivid picture of the role of intelligence analysis in informing crisis decision-making at the highest levels of our government. In 1967, prior, during, and immediately after the war, intelligence analysis provided a valuable warning function. Although the analysis ran contrary to the views initially held by senior policymakers, the President and his National Security team ultimately adopted policy based on intelligence analysis that alerted them to Arab troop movements, the thinking behind Egyptian plans regarding the Gulf of Aqaba, the likelihood of potential Soviet intervention in support of the Arabs, and Israel's ability to defeat Arab militaries.

By contrast, in 1973, intelligence analysis failed to assess Arab military movements and preparations and concluded—as late as the night preceding the Egyptian attack across the Suez Canal—that the Arabs would not attack. The result of this analytic failure was that the joint Egyptian-Syrian attack against Israel surprised US policymakers as well as Israel. Directorate of Intelligence (DI) analysts (and their Israeli counterparts) believed that Arab military inferiority would militate against an Arab attack on Israel. DI analysis did not explore the possibility that leaders might go to war—even at the risk of losing—if they believed they could thereby attain

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## Fifty Years of Informing Policy: The Directorate of Intelligence

certain national political objectives. DI analysts were unable to break out of the “cultural blinders” that might have underpinned their analysis of Arab war preparations.

### Intelligence Analysis and the June 1967 War: A Success Story

An examination of intelligence reporting and analysis in the period leading up to the June 5, 1967 war indicates that a specific set of circumstances contributed to the critical impact of intelligence on national policy in the three weeks preceding the war. According to an article by a former branch chief in the Directorate of Intelligence who dealt with the Middle East during that period, these circumstances and reasons included the following:

- First, the basic question which the policy makers asked—who will win if the US stays out?—was sharply defined. Second, the duration of the ‘crisis’...was only three weeks, from mid-May to dawn of June 5.... Third, the impact of the intelligence judgment was the more explosive in that this judgment ran nearly head-on into the initial impressions of some, at least, of the administration’s top advisers.”<sup>1</sup>

With Egyptian President Nasir’s closure of the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping on 23 May, senior US policymakers began to voice certain concerns about the impending crisis and tasked the Intelligence Community (IC) to address them. These perceptions—greatly influenced by reports from and conversations with Israeli government and intelligence officials—included the following:

- Nasir’s moves on Aqaba were part of an elaborate Soviet-Egyptian conspiracy to conduct an “offensive” war against Israel with the objective of eliminating Israel and US military and political influence from the region. Egyptian military

maneuvers included preparations for chemical warfare.

- Since Arab military capability was perceived to be superior to Israel’s, such a war would result in Israel’s military defeat, which meant the US would have to get involved—“quickly and tangibly”—in the war on Israel’s behalf in order to save “little Israel” from the “Red-Arab” menace, thereby potentially jeopardizing US national interests in the Arab world.<sup>2</sup>
- The Soviet Union would intervene in an Arab-Israeli war on the side of the Arabs, thereby raising the specter of a superpower confrontation.

The President and his advisers tasked the Intelligence Community to address these perceptions and to respond to Israeli policy and intelligence reports pushing these perceptions. In a series of papers prepared by the CIA’s Directorate of Intelligence and unanimously supported by the Intelligence Community, DI political and military analysts refuted all of the above perceptions and offered the following judgments:

- Nasir’s military moves were based on misinformation and misperceptions of Israeli actions and intentions and were not a result of a Soviet-Arab conspiracy to attack Israel.
- Nasir, together with other Arab leaders who jumped on Nasir’s bandwagon, was caught up in the nationalist euphoria and demagoguery of that time and believed the Arabs could defeat Israel.<sup>3</sup>
- Direct Soviet involvement in the war was highly unlikely, and in fact, the Soviets would most likely advise Nasir against going to war with Israel. Moscow’s objective was to score propaganda points against the US in Arab countries.

<sup>1</sup> J. L. Freshwater [pen-name], “Policy and Intelligence: The Arab-Israeli War,” *Studies in Intelligence* (Winter 1969), p.1. This article is available in declassified form in Record Group 263 (CIA) at the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, Maryland. “J. L. Freshwater” worked in CIA’s Office of Current Intelligence.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Directorate of Intelligence, “The Current Focus of the Near East Crisis,” 3 June 1967, reprinted in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Volume XIX, The Arab-Israeli War* (Washington, DC: Department of State, forthcoming), pp. 268-269.

- Egyptian military moves in Sinai, as well as Arab troop movements elsewhere were defensive and for political effect.
- The possibility of the Egyptians using chemical warfare was insignificant because of unfavorable local conditions.
- Most importantly, in case of war, Israel could hold the line on three fronts and simultaneously mount a successful offensive on the fourth front (the fronts include Sinai, Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon), could attain air superiority over Sinai in 24 hours, could regain the initiative on the ground in a few days, and, once fighting with Egypt had subsided, could occupy most of the West Bank in a few days.
- Intelligence Community, and based on the latest available information.
- Communicate precise, clear, and timely collection requirements to the field, especially in the midst of an impending crisis that is anticipated to seriously impact national security policy.
- Ensure that the analytic judgments reach top, senior policymakers in a quickly and immediately usable form.
- Try not to be cowed by policy views and “conventional wisdom” perceptions, especially if they contradict your initial analytic instincts and conclusions.

Based on this analysis, which was delivered to the White House ten days before the war, the President and his senior advisers “adopted a policy posture in consonance with the intelligence judgment” and decided against a heavy involvement in the war. They also advised Israel against initiating hostilities, since Egypt’s military moves were defensive in nature. Furthermore, the administration told the Israelis that “if they chose to take the military initiative, they would have to go it alone.” On 3 June, DI analysts at CIA warned of mounting pressure on the government in Israel—especially on the new minister of defense, Moshe Dayan—to make a decision in favor of war.<sup>4</sup> Two days later, Israel fired the first shots, although it claimed it was responding to a movement by Egyptian air and ground forces—a claim that was refuted by DI analysis.<sup>5</sup>

### 1967 Lessons Learned

The impact of intelligence on national policy in the June 1967 war offers lessons to DI analysts today. These include:

- Make sure the analytic bottom line judgment is clear, thoroughly vetted throughout the Intelli-

### The October 1973 War: A Story of Intelligence Failure

In 1973, intelligence analysts failed to perceive the growing possibility of a deliberate Arab attack against Israel, misread the large body of reporting—human and technical—on Egyptian and Syrian war preparations, and advised senior policy makers that a war, if one came, would be the result of one side’s accidental or pre-emptive reaction to the other’s defensive preparations. Whereas the Intelligence Community was unanimous in its “correct” analysis of events leading up to the 1967 war, intelligence analysts across the IC were equally unanimous in their misreading of the evidence in 1973. The US and Israel were broadsided by the Arab “October surprise,” in which Egypt and Syria on 6 October launched concerted assaults along the Suez Canal and the Golan Heights. Intelligence analysts today can learn several important lessons from that war.

The errors of evaluation were caused by attitudes and preconceptions underpinning the analysis, by the analysts’ reliance on the analytic judgments of their Israeli counterparts, and by their misreading of Arab intentions in the two weeks preceding the attack. As late as the evening before the attack, intelligence continued to insist that Arab war preparations were nothing out of the ordinary—that the

<sup>4</sup> *Foreign Relations*, p. 268.

<sup>5</sup> Office of Current Intelligence, “The Arab-Israeli War: Who Fired the First Shot,” 5 June 1967, reprinted in *Foreign Relations*, pp. 316-317.

## Fifty Years of Informing Policy: The Directorate of Intelligence

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Arabs believed they would be defeated by Israel and thus would not resort to war. Analysts also dismissed any possibility that Egyptian President Sadat could be orchestrating a deception in order to lull his administration into a false sense of security. The following statements from late-September, early October Central Intelligence Bulletins (CIBs) illustrate the analytic misjudgments:

- “President Sadat’s address to the nation last night was primarily a fence-mending effort designed to mollify and undercut domestic and foreign—primarily Soviet—opponents of his policy innovations. Although generally circumspect toward the US, Sadat made some uncharacteristically benevolent statements, reflecting a guarded optimism that Washington intends some action to break the Middle East impasse.”<sup>6</sup>
- “The exercise and alert activities under way in Egypt may be on a somewhat larger scale and more realistic than previous exercises, but they do not appear to be preparations for a military offensive against Israel.”<sup>7</sup>
- “Previous Egyptian exercises have been more paper-and-communications exercises than the current one, which evidently involves the mobilization of larger numbers of personnel.... The call-up of air force reservists is on a larger scale than that which occurred during the last major exercise in March, but this may be necessary because of the length of the alert. Tel Aviv assesses the Egyptian activity as normal, large-scale maneuvers and has not alerted its forces.”<sup>8</sup>
- “Both the Israelis and the Arabs are becoming increasingly concerned about the military activities of the other, although neither side appears to be bent on initiating hostilities.”<sup>9</sup>
- Analysts assessed that most of the Russian flights in early October were used to evacuate Soviet dependents from Egypt and Syria.<sup>10</sup>

- “For Egypt, a military initiative makes little sense at this critical juncture of President Sadat’s reorientation of domestic and foreign policies. Another round of hostilities would almost certainly destroy Sadat’s painstaking efforts to invigorate the economy and would run counter to his current efforts to build a united Arab political front, particularly among the less militant, oil-rich states. For the normally cautious Syrian President, a military adventure now would be suicidal, and he has said so.”<sup>11</sup>

Although it is difficult 30 years later to explain away the misreading by DI analysts of all the evidence on the eve of the outbreak of hostilities, it is possible to identify several causes that led to the failure.

- Accepting statements, and their implications, at face value. Intelligence analysts seemed to have accepted the statements made by Presidents Sadat and Asad about Israel’s military superiority as an ironclad proof of their intent not to wage an offensive war. The analysts reasoned that if Arab leaders rationally concluded that they would be defeated in a war with Israel, it would not make sense for them to go to war, and, therefore, they would not.
- Denial and deception (D&D). Because intelligence analysts did not have recent case studies pointing to Egyptian and Syrian denial and deception and may not have been trained and attuned to look for D&D, they failed to explore the possibility of such actions.
- Blind faith in Israeli intelligence. Intelligence analysts accepted the Israeli intelligence assessments that seemed to dismiss the military significance of Egyptian and Syrian military preparations on the eve of the war. If the Israelis judged those preparations as insignificant, why should we second-guess them?
- Cultural Biases. Analysts’ cultural blinders toward the Arabs might have blurred their vision and led them to conclude that the Arabs could not have devised such an elaborate war plan without

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<sup>6</sup> DI/Central Intelligence Bulletin (CIB), 29 Sep 73.

<sup>7</sup> CIB, 5 Oct 73.

<sup>8</sup> CIB, 5 Oct 73.

<sup>9</sup> CIB, 6 Oct 73.

<sup>10</sup> CIB, 6 Oct 73.

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<sup>11</sup> CIB, 6 Oct 73.

someone finding out about it, or that they could not have possibly recovered so quickly from their humiliating defeat in the 1967 war. If Arabs could not stand in line to get on a bus, how could they plan to cross the Suez Canal in the face of massive Israeli defensive lines on the other side?

### 1973 Lessons Learned

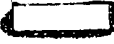
The wrong analytic judgments regarding Arab war preparations in 1973 offer DI analysts today a few important lessons, including the following:

- Question the conventional wisdom and regularly examine your assumptions, especially if analytical consensus emerges quickly on a particular judgment.
- Park your preconceptions and cultural assumptions at the door.
- Learn and relearn the behavior of other leaders, and factor into your analysis their assumptions about war and peace—and success and defeat.
- Constantly review the evidence from all sources and consider alternative explanations and scenarios to question current judgments.

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IV/1. CIB [Excerpt], 23 May 1967.

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\*Egypt-Israel: Nasir's announcement yesterday that Egypt will close the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping has brought him to the brink of war.

Israel has repeatedly made clear that any blockade of the gulf would be considered an act of war. Nasir nevertheless stated that Egypt was prepared to fight and expressed confidence about the outcome. "Israel today is not backed by Britain and France as was the case in 1956," he said in his announcement. "It has the United States, which supports it and supplies it with arms."

Having thus laid his prestige on the line, Nasir has assumed a position from which it would be very difficult to retreat. U Thant, who arrives in Cairo today, undoubtedly will try to dissuade him from carrying out his declaration, but the chances of success seem very slim.

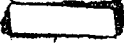
Nasir stated that ships flying the Israeli flag would not be permitted to transit the gulf, and according to press reports from Cairo, said that non-Israeli ships carrying strategic materials to Israel would also be stopped. A British ship, the Benvorlich, was heading northward toward the Strait of Tiran this morning and may be bound for the Israeli port of Eilat. The nature of its cargo is unknown.

Israel probably will not take any action until a ship is forcibly stopped, but the possibility of preemptive action cannot be discounted. The Israeli response is not likely to be confined to the Gulf of Aqaba.

Egypt, in preparation for enforcing its policy, has despatched a coastal artillery company to Sharm ash-Shaykh, near the Strait of Tiran. Cairo also is building up its naval and air strength at Hurghada, on the Egyptian coast of the Red Sea about 50 miles from Sharm ash-Shaykh. Nine torpedo boats were to arrive there yesterday and a squadron of twelve aircraft, presumably jet fighters, apparently are to be stationed there. Other

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evidence indicates Egypt also has two submarines, a destroyer, and four OSA guided-missile patrol boats in the Gulf of Suez. [REDACTED]

If Israel attacks Egypt, Syria almost certainly would intervene. Iraq and Algeria might also provide some form of military aid in addition to full political support. The other Arab states would give Nasir vocal support but would be unlikely to join the fight.

Moscow has not yet commented on Nasir's threat to close the gulf. Cairo's Middle East News Agency reports that yesterday the Soviet Party and Government sent Nasir a message pledging support for the Arabs against "imperialist conspiracies." Cairo has already asked Moscow to speed shipments of communications equipment, jet and diesel fuel, and naval mines, [REDACTED] and may have levied other requirements for military materiel. The Soviets will probably comply, but they are unlikely to assume a more direct military role. There has been no indication, [REDACTED] of any unusual Soviet military moves related to the Middle East. (TOP SECRET [REDACTED])

23 May 67

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IV/2. CIB [Excerpt], 3 June 1967.

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\*Arab States - Israel: (Information as of 4:30 AM EDT)

Cairo has threatened to close the Suez Canal to any nation which attempts to break the blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Riad said yesterday that the interests of the maritime countries would be "endangered" by any joint action. Cairo's semi-official Al-Ahram was more explicit--warning that nations seeking to break the blockade would be branded "aggressors" and denied use of the waterway.

Israeli motor torpedo boats may have reconnoitered yesterday near the Strait of Tiran and been pursued by an Egyptian destroyer.

The Syrian Government appears disturbed by the Egyptian-Jordanian defense pact and is censoring Egyptian news releases circulated in Damascus. Local press attacks on King Husayn continue.

even before the Nasir-Husayn rapprochement, officials in Syria's ruling Baath party were concerned by the way Nasir was re-establishing himself as leader of the Arabs and winning both popular acclaim and the open admiration of many Syrian army officers. As a result the Baathist regime has taken precautions to ensure internal security, including the arrest of some supporters of Nasir. (continued)

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Nasir apparently is making soundings through King Husayn toward a possible rapprochement with King Faysal.

Nasir had discussed the question of the Strait of Tiran with the King and asked him to seek Faysal's cooperation in stationing Saudi forces opposite the Egyptians at the Strait so that the blockade would have "an international stamp."

Yesterday's clash between a group of Syrians and an Israeli patrol was the most serious incident in several weeks. One Syrian and two Israelis were killed, according to Israeli radio reports which described the Syrians as Palestinian commandos.

Palestinian saboteurs are also continuing to operate along the Lebanese-Israeli border.

members of Fatah and other Palestinian terrorist groups in refugee camps in southern Lebanon are ready to take new action against Israel.

within the past few days Lebanon's army has apprehended 11 infiltrators from Syria near the Israeli border.

Israeli Labor Minister Yigal Allon insisted yesterday that some protection of Israel's borders against a renewal of Arab terrorist operations was one of three conditions to be fulfilled if an otherwise "inevitable" military clash were to be avoided. He said withdrawal of Egyptian troop concentrations along the border and the lifting of the blockade in the Strait of Tiran were the other two conditions. ~~(TOP SECRET)~~

(Map)

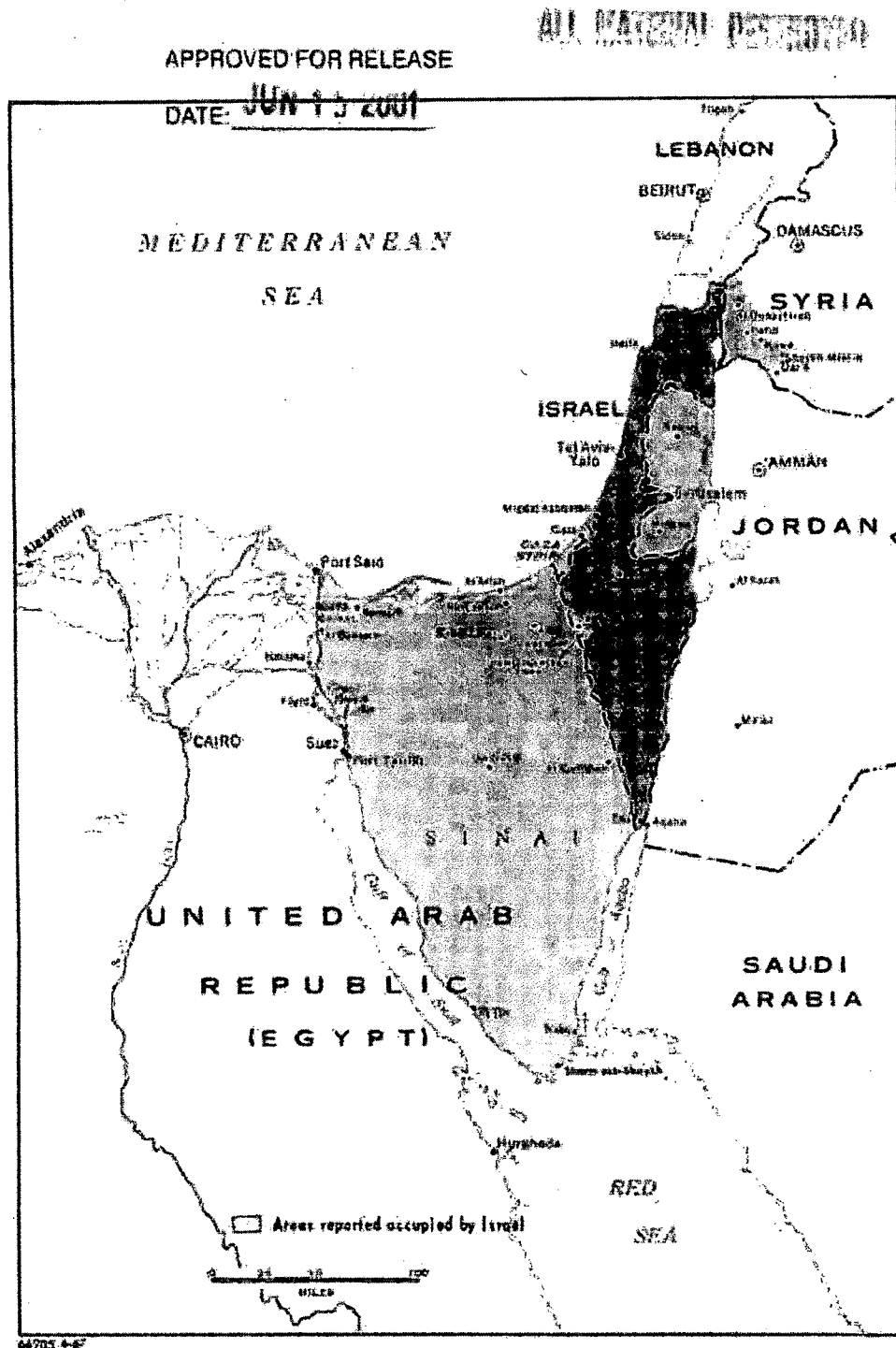
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Chapter IV  
The June 1967 and October 1973 Arab-Israeli Wars

IV/3. Mid East Map, 1967.



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IV/4. CIB [Excerpt], 6 June 1967.

~~TOP SECRET~~Arab States - Israel: (Information as of 4:30 AM EDT)

Cairo may be preparing to launch a campaign urging strikes against US interests throughout the Arab world.

Cairo's Voice of the Arabs last night claimed it had actual proof that US and British aircraft carriers played a role in the Israeli "aggression." Both Egypt and Syria in their domestic radiobroadcasts this morning called on the "Arab masses" to destroy all US and "imperialist" interests in the "Arab homeland." Such statements have not yet been monitored on Cairo's international broadcasts, however.

Demonstrations have already taken place against US embassies and installation all over the Arab world. Mobs have attacked the US and British embassies in Tripoli and the US consulate in Benghazi. A march on Wheelus Air Force Base was prevented, but the headquarters of the American-owned Oasis Oil Company was reportedly taken over by its Libyan employees, who have been issued orders to close down all oil operations. US and British embassies in Tunisia have also been sacked, and the British consulate in Basra, Iraq, has been attacked. The US cultural center in Algiers has been ransacked, and demonstrations took place in Khartoum.

Arab oil-producing countries, now meeting in Baghdad, say they will stop selling oil to any country which supports Israel in the Middle East fighting. Any oil company making oil available to Israel "from any source or in any form" would be subjected to a collective ban in the Arab world. Baghdad radio said this morning that the pumping of Iraqi oil had been stopped "because of US and UK attitudes."

Israel appears to have gained an early and perhaps overwhelming victory in the air but the progress of the war on the ground is still unclear.

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In Egypt, Israeli air raids were directed against Egyptian airfields and also against Port Said. Three Syrian airfields were hit. In Amman, Jordan the airfield, the radio station, and the royal palace were bombed.

ten Israeli planes which entered Lebanon withdrew after being met with antiaircraft fire.

The Israeli military has stated that Syrian and Jordanian planes have attacked targets within Israel. According to Baghdad radio, Iraqi planes raided an Israeli airport and destroyed seven planes, but this is unconfirmed.

If Israeli claims regarding damages to Arab combat aircraft--mostly by strafing and bombing--are valid, they have destroyed the entire Jordanian inventory of 21, two thirds of the Syrian inventory of 69, and 250 of about 430 Egyptian aircraft. The Egyptians still had at last report at least 43 of their original 55 SU-7 fighters and about 120 MIGs, but their light bomber force appears to be no longer effective. Lebanon's 20 fighters are still operational, and the Iraqis have apparently lost only nine of approximately 135 fighters and bombers. The Israelis also claim to have destroyed several Arab transports and helicopters.

Arab counterclaims of 158 Israeli combat aircraft destroyed seem grossly exaggerated, but the exact losses to the Israeli force of approximately 270 planes are not known. The Israelis announced the loss of 19 pilots and 19 planes, which presumes none were destroyed on the ground.

Firm information on ground action remains sparse. The Israelis claim they have captured the "outer positions" of Al Kuntillah in southeastern Sinai and reached the outskirts of Al-Arish in northern Sinai. They also say they have taken Khan Yunis in the southern part of the Gaza Strip, the scene of the heaviest fighting. If their claim is true, the Israelis have cut off Egyptian and Palestinian troops in the northern section of the Strip.

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## Fifty Years of Informing Policy: The Directorate of Intelligence

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Yesterday evening, Egyptian Foreign Minister Riyad told Egypt's ambassador at the UN that the Israelis had been forced to move out of Khan Yunis in the direction of Abu Uwayqilah, "but suffered severe losses." Riyad seemed generally optimistic about the course of the fighting. earlier he had been less confident,

There has been no evidence to confirm an Israeli claim that prior to the outbreak of fighting, the Egyptian 4th armored division had moved forward to the Al Kuntillah area along with a force of division strength, comprising infantry and armored elements. The Israelis claim that hostilities broke out when they moved to intercept a force in this area moving toward Israeli territory.

In Jordan, King Husayn said this morning that the Israelis seem intent on pulverizing Jordan's army and the country's border areas. He claimed that Jerusalem's holy places were also endangered. Without an air force, the King said Jordan is defenseless, but that Israel is pushing ahead in a "punitive fashion."

Yesterday's official Soviet statement on the war predictably condemned Israel and promised "resolute" support to the Arabs. Moscow said it reserved the right to take "all steps that might be necessitated by the situation" but made no specific commitment.

The UN Security Council reconvenes at 11:30 EDT this morning to again consider a ceasefire resolution.

Egypt would insist on a withdrawal of armed forces to their pre-hostilities position. He also suggested, however, that Egypt might change its mind if, in the meantime, its own armed forces had moved into Israel. ~~(TOP~~

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(Map)

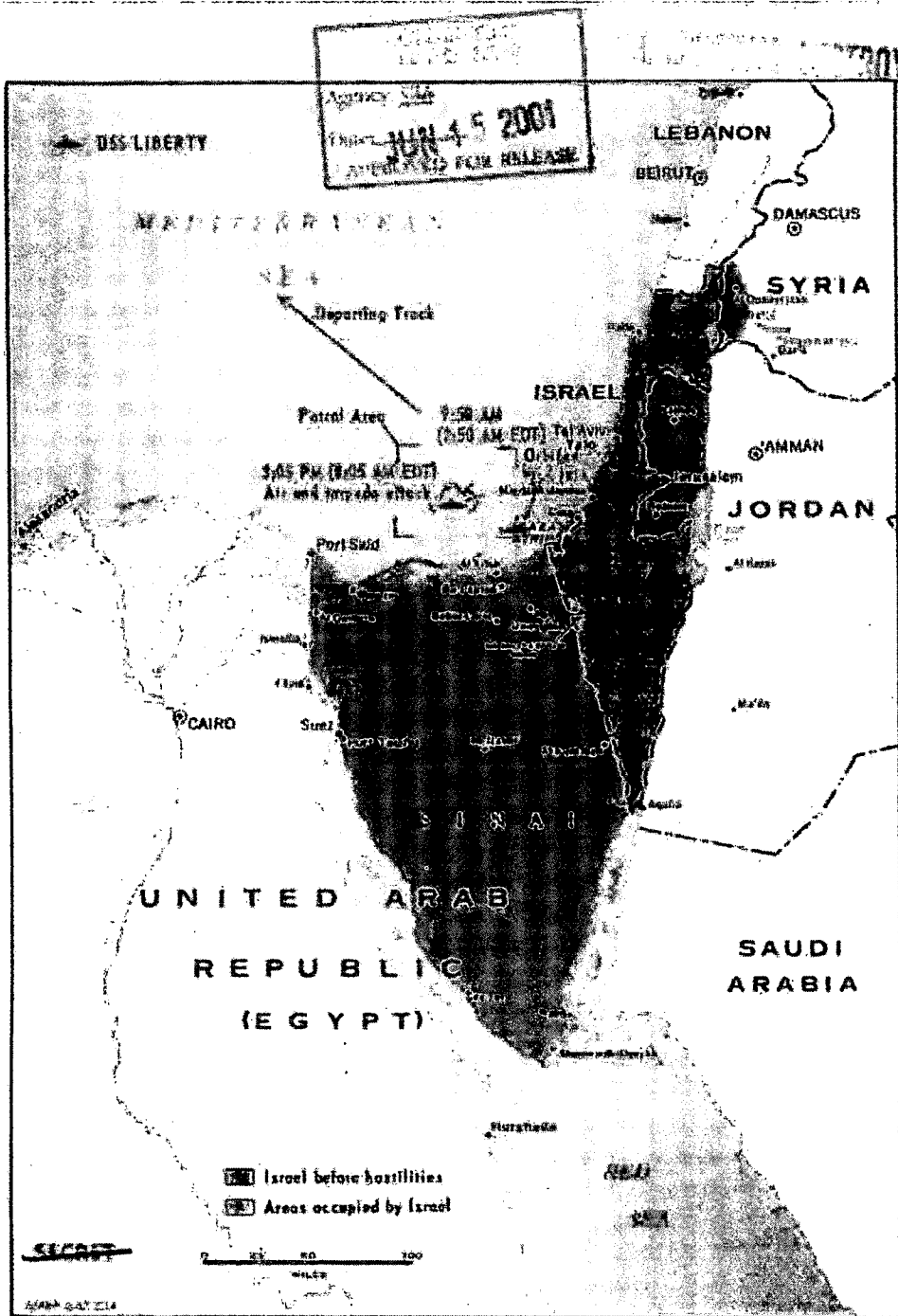
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## Chapter 11

IV25. Notated Map, June 1967.



## Fifty Years of Informing Policy: The Directorate of Intelligence

IV/6. CIB [Excerpt], 8 June 1967.

~~TOP SECRET~~\*Arab States - Israel: (Information as of 4:30 AM EDT)

Military Developments: The Israelis may have broken their agreement with Jordan to comply with the UN's cease-fire order, which is also being disregarded on other fronts.

Israeli tanks were moving into northwestern Jordan. fighting had slackened following announcement of the cease-fire at 4:00 PM EDT yesterday--the UN deadline--but that it picked up during the night. The Israelis are said to be shelling Jordanian positions near the Syrian border city of Dar'a.

The Israelis may be making a thrust into Jordan with the ultimate aim of attacking Syria. So far, Israeli-Syrian encounters have been relatively small-scale. The Syrians, however, issued a communiqué this morning stating that Israeli planes were raiding Syrian positions "in the northern and central sectors of the front."

Amman has not communicated with Jordanian forces remaining west of the Jordan River since late on 7 June. Jordanian officials are claiming privately that "80 percent" of the Jordanian brigades have been lost, and all military combat vehicles are out of action. Israeli forces took an estimated 4,000 Jordanian prisoners during the capture of the Arab part of Jerusalem. Arab refugees are reported streaming eastward across the Jordan River.

Advance Israeli armor elements approached the Suez Canal so rapidly on 7 June that they apparently cut off a major portion of the retreating Egyptian forces. At least half of Egypt's armor and about 100,000 troops were in the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip prior to 5 June.

public realization of the Arab defeat has generated strong feelings against Nasir and "Soviet betrayal in Egypt's hour of need."

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Nevertheless, the Egyptians have officially announced their refusal to comply with the cease-fire order.

Arab Reactions: [US Government installations and ARAMCO facilities at Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, have been damaged by mobs, and the consulate in Aleppo, Syria was attacked and burned yesterday. Inflammatory broadcasts claiming US and British participation in the hostilities, continue to fan anti-American sentiment. UAR officials at the UN are reported to be circulating a charge that the US gave Israel intelligence obtained from satellite photography.]

Saudi Arabia has joined Algeria, Kuwait, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq in cutting off oil shipments to the West. Bahrain has decided to stop tanker loading and refinery operations have been slowed. Libya has stopped oil pumping and banned exports although operators and experts have been told to stand fast in order to reopen production when it becomes feasible. [

Lebanon has decided only to recall its ambassadors from the US and Great Britain at this time.

Lebanon decided  
not to break relations completely

The Sudanese foreign minister has stated that although the Sudan is breaking off diplomatic relations, the government would like to retain economic, cultural, and consular relations. [

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## Fifty Years of Informing Policy: The Directorate of Intelligence

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**Soviet Activities:** The Soviets delivered a harshly worded note to Israel yesterday threatening to break relations if Israel did not comply with the cease-fire order. They warned of the possibility of further unspecified measures.

Izvestia yesterday carried a dispatch from its correspondent in London attributing the Arab severance of relations with the UK to "information on the Arab side" about British participation in the war. The paper did not mention the US or comment on the Arab charges against the UK. Soviet propagandists continue, however, to accuse the US and UK of encouraging Israel to begin the war.

Late Note: Israel's Foreign Office this morning denied that Israel had breached the cease-fire agreement with Jordan. ~~SECRET~~

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IV/7. CIB [Excerpt], 29 September 1973

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EGYPT: President Sadat's address to the nation last night was primarily a fence-mending effort designed to mollify and undercut domestic and foreign--primarily Soviet--opponents of his recent policy innovations. At the same time, he made no apologies for those policies and made it clear that he will pursue them. Although generally circumspect toward the US, Sadat made some uncharacteristically benevolent statements, reflecting a guarded optimism that Washington intends some action to break the Middle East impasse.

The most dramatic portion of the speech, made on the anniversary of President Nasir's death, came at its conclusion when Sadat announced an amnesty for a group of students arrested during demonstrations early this year, as well as the reinstatement of a large number of journalists purged for their leftist views. The conciliatory gestures are designed to head off the possibility of further student disturbances when the school year opens next month, to answer legitimate student grievances, and to give substance to Sadat's moves toward social liberalization.

On the subject of his domestic and foreign policy reforms, Sadat, in essence, invoked the memory of Nasir to support his program of change away from Nasirism and socialism. Noting that one of Nasirism's most important characteristics is "its ability to respond to constant movement," Sadat explained his own policy of "evolution" as both based on his predecessor's movement and unique in itself. Although intending to ease the misgivings of remaining Nasir devotees, Sadat could not resist the temptation to emphasize the greater merit of his own program over Nasir's; his government has proved, he said, "that the man came from the nation, and not the nation from the man."

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29 Sep 73

Central Intelligence Bulletin

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Although Sadat derided the US for supporting Israel and echoed his usual rejection of an interim agreement to reopen the Suez Canal and institute a partial Israeli withdrawal, he expressed pleased surprise at Secretary of State Kissinger's meeting on 25 September with Arab representatives at the UN. Sadat noted that Egypt has already made its position clear to the US, but he did not use the occasion to spell out the controversial specifics of that position. Sadat remains skeptical of US intentions, but his approach reflects a sense of expectation toward possible US moves on the Arab-Israeli conflict and a desire to avoid dampening prospects for movement. He made a point of noting at the end of his speech that he had deliberately avoided rhetoric on "the battle."

Sadat took a balanced approach toward Egypt's delicate relations with the USSR. Without ever mentioning the Soviets directly, he explained policy changes that have been disturbing Moscow in terms intended to ease Soviet misgivings, but he did not give any indication that he plans to alter his new moves away from socialism. Sadat is not a friend of the Soviets, but he wants to maintain good relations with them, and he has been at pains, since initiating his policy realignment in July, to portray the Soviets as political allies.

This relaxed attitude has met with a testy Soviet reaction.

His statements last night indicate greater restraint, but further Soviet chiding could bring a heated Egyptian response that would risk further damaging Soviet interests.

29 Sep 73

Central Intelligence Bulletin

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IV/8. CIB [Excerpt], 5 October 1973.

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EGYPT: The exercise and alert activities under way in Egypt may be on a somewhat larger scale and more realistic than previous exercises, but they do not appear to be preparations for a military offensive against Israel.

Cairo usually conducts such exercises in the fall and spring. The scenario usually involves defending against an Israeli assault across the Suez Canal and then launching a counterattack. It is unusual, but not without precedent, for Egyptian forces to exercise during Ramadan, the Moslem month of religious fasting.

Previous Egyptian exercises have been more paper-and-communications exercises than the current one, which evidently involves the mobilization of larger numbers of personnel. The actual number of troops involved is not known. The movement of commando units and the use of a more secure means of communication make the exercise more realistic. Because of this realism, Cairo may have put its air defense and air forces on alert in preparation for the exercise and as a precaution against an Israeli reaction. The call-up of air force reservists is on a larger scale than that which occurred during the last major exercise in March, but this may be necessary because of the length of the alert.

Tel Aviv assesses the Egyptian activity as normal, large-scale maneuvers and has not alerted its forces. ~~TOP SECRET~~

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IV/9. CIB [Excerpt], 6 October 1973

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ISRAEL-EGYPT-SYRIA: Both the Israelis and the Arabs are becoming increasingly concerned about the military activities of the other, although neither side appears to be bent on initiating hostilities.

Most of these flights probably are being used to evacuate Soviet dependents from Egypt and Syria.

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In any case, Soviet attention to the Middle East has risen sharply in the last few days.

Exercise and alert activities in Egypt are continuing, but elements of the air force and navy appear to be conducting normal training activity. While the Israelis have reported a build-up of tanks and artillery along the Suez Canal, this cannot be confirmed. The Egyptians usually conduct such exercises in the fall and spring, but the current exercise is more realistic in that it includes the movement of troops and the mobilization of more reservists.

Syrian air activity appears to be normal, but there have been a number of reports, , that Damascus is redeploying some of its ground forces in the Golan Heights area.

The Israeli attitude toward these developments has changed considerably since 1 October, when they viewed the activity in Egypt as normal and that in Syria as defensive in nature. During the past few days, the Israelis have conducted air reconnaissance of both the Suez Canal and Golan Heights areas.

but the flights apparently drew no Syrian reaction.

For Egypt, a military initiative makes little sense at this critical juncture of President Sadat's reorientation of domestic and foreign policies. Another round of hostilities would almost certainly destroy Sadat's painstaking efforts to invigorate the economy and would run counter to his current efforts to build a united Arab political front, particularly among the less militant, oil-rich states,

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For the normally cautious Syrian President, a military adventure now would be suicidal, and he has said so. Far from seeking revenge for the loss of their MIG-21s to the Israeli Air Force, the Syrians appear to be bracing for a possible second blow from Israel.

Syrian fears, now being reflected in Damascus radiobroadcasts, could lead to a mobilization of their defenses, which in turn could alarm and galvanize the Israelis. Such a cycle of actions and reactions increases the risk of military clashes which neither side originally intended. ~~TOP SECRET~~

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IV/10. CIB [Excerpt], 10 October 1973.

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ARAB STATES - ISRAEL: The war continues to be bitterly contested in the Sinai and the Golan Heights, with no sign that hostilities will end soon.

Both sides have seen heavy fighting, but few successes on the Sinai front. The Israelis have mounted air strikes against Egyptian forces on the east bank, the Port Said area, at least two airfields in the interior of Egypt, and the bridges that the Egyptians keep rebuilding across the canal. This air activity, however, has failed to halt the cross-canal reinforcement and resupply of the formidable Egyptian force on the east bank. The Israelis have publicly acknowledged that they have had to withdraw from the Bar Lev defense line to positions slightly within the Sinai. The Egyptians have solidified their control of the east bank, but have not made significant advances. In naval action, the Israelis claim to have sunk three Egyptian Osa-class missile patrol boats in an engagement midway between Port Said and Alexandria.

Hard fighting continued on the Golan Heights after dark last night, with both sides attempting to gain control of the much-disputed town of Qunaytirah. Effective Israeli control of the air allowed constant air strikes with relatively few losses--an advantage not enjoyed during much of the earlier fighting. Under this cover, the Israelis stabilized their positions along lines roughly paralleling the pre-October cease-fire line. This improvement in the Israeli position, however, has come at a high cost. After four days of fighting, Israeli losses are believed to exceed 80 aircraft, 600 tanks, and 1,000 men, against Arab losses of 140 aircraft, 650 tanks, and 6,000 to 7,000 men.

Israel yesterday mounted its first air strikes against Damascus proper, seeking to destroy the Syrian Air Force Headquarters, the Defense Ministry, and General Army Headquarters. In the process, the Soviet Cultural Center was hit, giving rise to press accounts of substantial Soviet casualties. Damascus later denied that any Russians were killed.

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The Israeli Government is being criticized--albeit quietly--by some elements of the public for its failure to launch a pre-emptive military strike and its failure to mobilize earlier. When the relatively high casualties and materiel losses are made public, bitterness may well intensify, and pressure for deep ground strikes into Egypt and Syria might grow. The government has attempted to prepare the public for a drawn out war, acknowledging that "in the south, the struggle is becoming more intensive and decisive turns are awaited."

Algeria, Iraq, Libya, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia reportedly have contributed or are considering contributing military support to Egypt and Syria. Such support--and the motives of those offering it--is important more for its political than its military implications. Saudi Arabia, for example, is reported to have expressed its willingness to enter the battle if requested to do so by Sadat. Saudi participation would be only symbolic, but it would further enhance the conservative Faysal's growing prominence in Arab politics. Both King Husayn of Jordan and President Franjiah of Lebanon are hard pressed to explain their inaction, and have been humiliated by Israeli violations of their territory.

The Arab press has begun to criticize the US, both for the stand taken by the US at the United Nations and for the "menacing deployment of the Sixth Fleet." According to press reports, Kuwait has called for an immediate meeting of Arab petroleum ministers to discuss how oil might be used as a weapon in the current conflict. Palestinian media, but no Arab governments, have called on the Arab states to halt the flow of oil to the West.

Yesterday's Security Council meeting on the Middle East was dominated by Arab-Israeli recriminations resulting from Israeli air attacks on the Damascus and Cairo areas. Israel apologized for causing civilian casualties, but Soviet delegate Malik, incensed by erroneous press accounts of Soviet casualties, blasted the Israelis and walked out of the session. No resolutions were tabled.

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At home, the Soviets appear to be playing down the Middle East conflict. Premier Kosygin mentioned the fighting only briefly in his speech yesterday at a luncheon for visiting Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka. In Arab capitals, however, Soviet diplomats have been active. In Cairo, Ambassador Vinogradov had his fourth meeting in as many days with President Sadat, and top Soviet officials have met with Palestinian leaders and government officials in Algeria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Yemen (Sana). The thrust of the Soviet message is that Moscow is on the Arabs' side, but that it is up to other Arab states to provide Egypt and Syria with "the greatest possible aid and support." ~~(TOP SECRET)~~

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IV/12. CIB [Excerpt], 18 October 1973.

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ARAB STATES - ISRAEL: Military action in the Sinai was heavy yesterday, while fighting on the Syrian front was primarily limited to artillery duels and some air action.

Both Egypt and Israel reported that large-scale tank battles were under way throughout yesterday in the central sector of the Egyptian front. An Israeli military spokesman characterized the armored clashes as the biggest in Israeli history; he claimed that 90-100 Egyptian tanks were destroyed in the fighting. Concentrated air strikes on the Port Said area continued yesterday and a raid by Israeli frogmen against the port took place, reportedly damaging several ships. The Egyptian Air Force was more active against Israeli aircraft and on several occasions pursued attacking planes back across the canal. Egyptian aggressiveness in the air may reflect a decrease in the effectiveness of their SAM defense system.

The fate of the small Israeli force on the west bank north of the Great Bitter Lake remains uncertain. Cairo claims that the force, which crossed the canal two days ago, has been wiped out. The Israelis, however, say the force is still operational.

There was little movement on the Syrian front yesterday. Minor ground clashes and artillery exchanges took place approximately along the same lines as the previous day. In the air, the Israelis reportedly struck Latakia and Tartus, and claim to have downed eight Syrian aircraft. The Syrians claim five Israeli aircraft were destroyed. The Saudi Arabian force in Syria, which has yet to see battle, is located just south of Al Harrah.

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Israeli Foreign Minister Eban indicated yesterday that Tel Aviv is ready to examine a cease-fire proposal, either for a cessation of hostilities "in place" or along the lines which existed prior to the current fighting. Eban said he thought Damascus was "psychologically" ready to accept a cease-fire, but he doubted Cairo's readiness. Egypt, according to Eban, is "living in a euphoria that goes beyond the realities of its military situation." Eban discounted the likelihood that Moscow is now in a mood to participate in a peace effort. He said that the Soviet Union is either unable to influence Egypt or finds the present situation to Moscow's advantage.

Eban said that Israel accepts the precise terms of Security Council Resolution 242, and would agree to withdraw to secure and recognized boundaries, but not to "total, immediate, or unconditional withdrawal." He went on to explain though that withdrawal to the June 1967 borders is out of the question, and would mean suicide for Israel. Eban said that the clear lesson of the last two weeks to every Israeli is the need for secure boundaries. He said he hoped that if a resolution is introduced in the Security Council that it would simply call for a cease-fire. No attempt should be made, he said, to combine in one package elements of a final settlement and a cease-fire itself.

In his first public statement since the outbreak of the current hostilities, King Husayn yesterday told Israel that it could have peace or territory, but not both. He urged Tel Aviv to opt for peace before time runs out. The Jordanian monarch described Tel Aviv's policy as an expansionist one, sugar-coated under the guise of trying to maintain secure boundaries. Secure boundaries, he added, cannot be assured by positions on the ground, rather security can only be established "when people have a willingness to live together."

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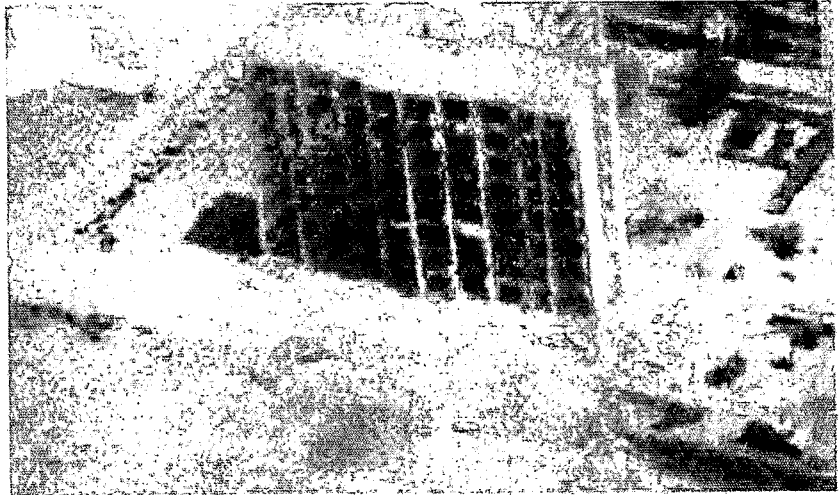
He added that Jordan will never give up its claim to territory lost during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. The King made no mention of the demands of some Arabs that the Jordanian Army launch an attack against Israel from Jordanian territory, opening up a third front. Rather defensively, he described the Jordanian-Israeli border as the "longest confrontation line" and said that his army's defensive posture prevented Tel Aviv from mounting an operation which would endanger the entire northern front. Israel's Prime Minister Meir advised Husayn yesterday to stay out of the war.

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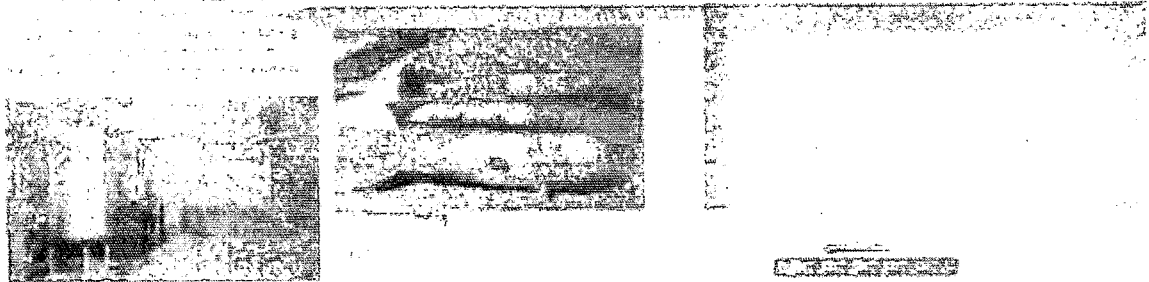


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