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FLAWED POLICY: SUÉZ 1956

BY

COL. EL MICHAEL L. WARNER

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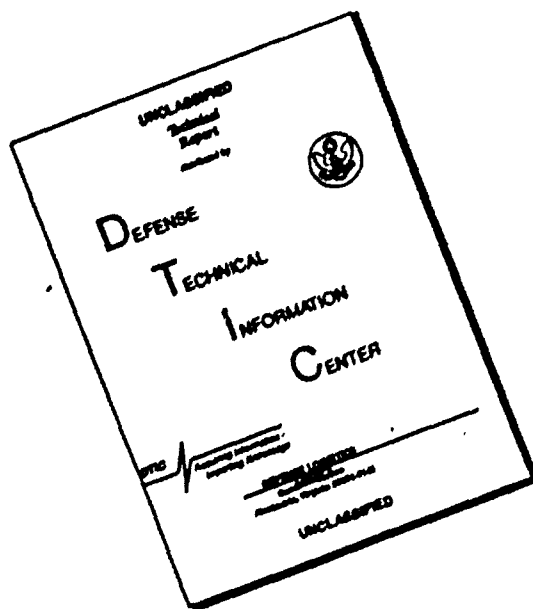
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<p>—Successful military operations are the culmination of careful planning based upon clearly articulated national and operational objectives. When planning the campaign, the commander must be completely aware of the political sensitivities and objectives so that his operation achieves the national objectives. Additionally, the commander must have the required forces available when needed so that he can quickly and forcefully execute his operation and successfully terminate military involvement. These key factors</p>		

required for successful military operations were absent during the planning and execution of the Anglo, French and Israeli intervention in Egypt during the Suez Crisis of 1956. As a direct result, the operation was a political and military failure which failed to achieve the objectives of the nations involved. The United States must apply the lessons learned from the 1956 Suez Crisis as it resources its military forces in the wake of looming budget reductions. Nowhere is the necessity to ensure adherence to the Army Chief of Staff's imperatives for the future of the Army more clearly identified than in the lessons of the 1956 Suez military operations.

USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

FLAWED POLICY: SUEZ 1956

An Individual Study Project  
Intended for Publication

by

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30 March 1990

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Michael L. Warner, COL, FA

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Successful military operations are the culmination of careful planning based upon clearly articulated national and operational objectives. When planning the campaign, the commander must be completely aware of the political sensitivities and objectives so that his operation achieves the national objectives. Additionally, the commander must have the required forces available when needed so that he can quickly and forcefully execute his operation and successfully terminate military involvement. These key factors required for successful military operations were absent during the planning and execution of the Anglo, French and Israeli intervention in Egypt during the Suez Crisis of 1956. As a direct result, the operation was a political and military failure which failed to achieve the objectives of the nations involved. The United States must apply the lessons learned from the 1956 Suez Crisis as it resources its military forces in the wake of looming budget reductions. Nowhere is the necessity to ensure adherence to the Army Chief of Staff's imperatives for the future of the Army more clearly identified than in the lessons of the 1956 Suez military operations.



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As evidenced by the United States' recent intervention in Panama, America must maintain its capability to project military power to protect its national interests. It is clearly evident that the synchronization of political and military objectives and the operational planning for Operation Just Cause resulted in the highly successful execution of a campaign that will become a model against which future power projection operations will be measured.

Similar military operations have not been as successful. This paper analyzes one such campaign, the 1956 Anglo, French and Israeli war against Egypt, and identifies the reasons for that military venture to fail to achieve the political objectives desired by the governments involved. As will be seen, lessons learned from analysis of the 1956 Suez Crisis can be applied directly to the present day formulation of national strategy and corresponding restructuring of U.S. military forces in the aftermath of the tremendous changes occurring in the U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe.

As with any event that occurs in a volatile and complex area like the Middle East, there is no single cause that precipitated the conflict that took place in Sinai Desert and the Suez Canal in October and November of 1956. The effects of the dissolution of the English and French colonial empires, the rising nationalism of Arab countries and their antagonism to the survival of the Israeli state,

and the desires of the Western powers to contain the spread of communism -- all coupled with the personalities of strong willed national leaders -- provided the ingredients for an explosive situation. The catalyst that set off the Suez Crisis was the nationalization of the Suez Canal by Egypt's President, Gamel Abdul Nasser, on 26 July 1956.

Nasser had become the preeminent Arab leader and the leading spokesman for Arab nationalism. His belief that only a strong Egypt could sit at the bargaining table and negotiate with Israel had caused him to turn to the U.S.S.R for arms support after repeated efforts to obtain arms from the West. (1)

At the same time he saw Egypt being threatened by an aggressive neighbor, he and his country were subjected to what was perceived by them to be a blow to their national pride. This occurred when the United States, on 19 July 1956, refused to provide financial assistance to Egypt for construction of the Aswan Dam project on the Nile River. As a direct result, Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal two weeks later. His desires were not only to have full control over the revenues the Canal generated, but also to recover full sovereignty over every inch of Egypt and to eliminate foreign influence over the economy. (2)

Reaction to the nationalization of the canal by the British, French and Israelis was focussed upon two primary issues. The first was the man, Nasser. All three countries saw him as the leader of a dangerous Arab nationalist movement that was becoming stronger and was a threat to each



country: Israel's survival, France's colonial interests in Algeria, and Britain's continued presence and prestige in the Middle East. The British and French Prime Ministers -- Anthony Eden and Guy Molet respectively -- saw Nasser as Hitler incarnate and regarded the Suez as a potential second Munich if they failed to respond.

The second concern was economic. England and France viewed a nationalized canal under full Egyptian control as a threat to the flow of oil from Iran and the Gulf States. England saw herself cut off from Asia, and from trade with her colonies and former colonies. Both England and France perceived Nasser's act as theft of property from the stockholders of the Canal Holding Company -- a stock company that owned and managed the canal -- in spite of Nasser's pledge to reimburse the stockholders for their shares. While Israel had been prohibited from using the canal prior to nationalization, the Israeli Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, saw Nasser's act as further proof that Egypt was becoming more aggressive and that war was inevitable.

The response by Britain and France was to begin formulating a national strategy that had as its aim to return the Suez Canal to western control, and to destroy Nasser and neutralize his ability to support nationalistic causes in the region. (3) While other elements of power -- particularly, economic and political elements -- were exercised in coordination with the military element, the use of military power was viewed as the essential means of regaining control of the Canal from the beginning. Israel's

isolation in the area left her no option other than military if she chose to act.

The initial desire of both the British and French governments was to act swiftly and forcefully with military forces to bring about a solution to the problem. Such action, immediately after Nasser's declaration of nationalization, would have had broad public support and may have been successful.

A gross overestimation of Egyptian capability precluded any aggressive response by the British and French. The intelligence assessment of Egyptian capability was based on receipt of modern equipment provided by the Russians and not on an aggregate analysis of equipment, training and force readiness. Other sources estimated that only 50 of 200 Soviet tanks were operational at the time and that the Air Force was in similar straits, with only 30 of the 100 new Mig-15 fighters and 10 of the 50 Ilyushin bombers combat-ready. (4) Moshe Dyan, Chief of the Israeli General Staff at the time, believed that a rapid and forceful response at this early time would have crumbled Nasser's military and achieved its objectives. (5)

While some light forces from each nation may have been able to respond quickly, the overestimate of the capability of the Egyptian armed forces by British and French military leaders convinced all concerned that a heavier and more powerful force would be necessary to accomplish the goals of the operation. Modern fighters and bombers were either in NATO and would take some time to deploy to the area, or were

stationed in Arab countries who would object to their bases being used to attack another Arab state. Cyprus had been designated the strategic base in the Mediterranean area by the British, but had not been built up to provide such a capability and was itself the focus of a war of self-determination. It would have to be improved to be used as a staging base.

The majority of the British Army's strategic reserve was involved in anti-terrorist activities on the island of Cyprus. Paratroopers stationed on the island had not done parachute training for months, and the infantry and commandos had not practiced amphibious or combined arms training for over a year. There were no transport aircraft and only two landing ship tanks (LSTs) in the area of operation. Almost all of the amphibious landing craft were in mothballs in England. The only armored force in the area was the 10th British Armored Division, stationed in Libya. However, the division had no tank transports, limiting its mobility. In the end the division could not have been used because the Libyan government would not grant permission for it to stage from Libya to attack its Arab neighbor. (6)

The French Army was little better off. Although it was a more combat-seasoned force because of its experiences in Southeast Asia and Algeria, the Algerian struggle had drained off the reserves; and, like the British, they had only a few landing craft and air transports available.

The assessment of the respective Chiefs of Staff was that in order to achieve the strategic objectives, it would

be approximately six weeks before the process of integration of the two nation's forces and other preparations would be complete and offensive operations could be undertaken. (7)

Nasser had correctly assumed that the British and French would not be able to take military action against him when he decided to execute his plan to nationalize the canal. He believed that Britain could not cooperate with Israel nor risk its position and interests in the Middle East. His assessment of British force dispositions and capabilities led him to conclude correctly that it would take at least two months for the British to mobilize a force capable of taking action against him. By that time he believed that a diplomatic arrangement would be negotiated. France, he assessed, was occupied in Algeria to the extent that she would not be able to participate in armed action against Egypt. (8)

It is clear that the lack of preparedness of the British and French to react immediately and resolutely to the Egyptian nationalization had been assessed correctly by Nasser. Neither country had the capability to deter Nasser; and, once he acted, neither could present a credible show of force to cause him to back down. Both governments were, however, determined that Nasser's Nationalization Act was not going to remain unchallenged. Actions to increase force preparedness began. Reservists were mobilized, forces were brought to increased readiness and repositioned, and aircraft and technicians were moved to Cyprus, which was transformed into an operational base. (9)

OPERATIONAL COMMAND  
STRUCTURE

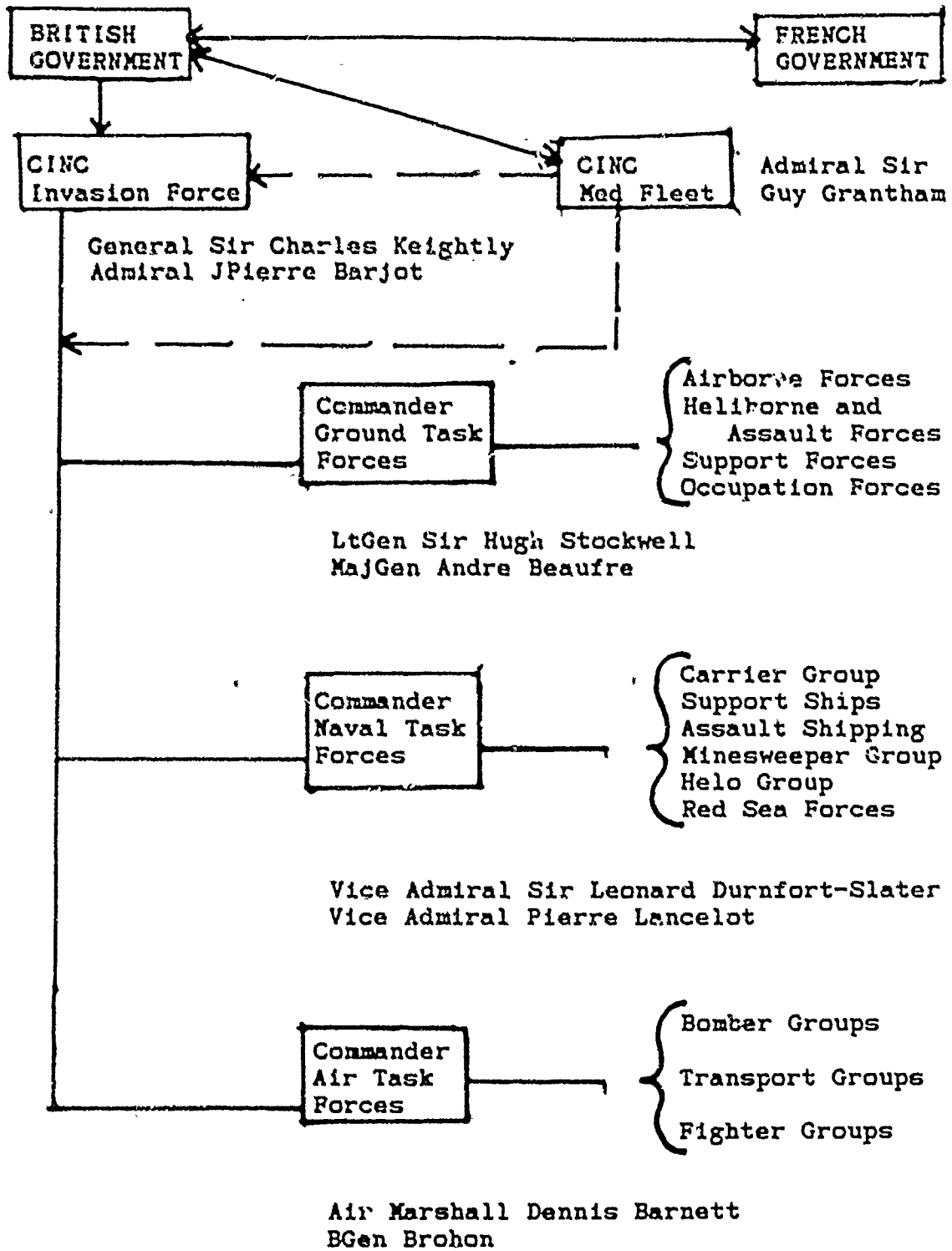


Figure 1

A combined Anglo-French staff was formed to begin planning the campaign. (Figure 1) It was decided that the British would take the lead because Egypt had traditionally been in the English sphere of influence, and because both Cyprus and Malta, which would be the staging and support bases for the operations, were British facilities. The "special relationship" with America that could be claimed by the British also contributed to the decision for British leadership in the operation in hopes that Britain's influence with the U.S. would help maintain American neutrality. (10)

The Commander of British Land Forces in the Middle East -- General Sir Charles Kneightly -- was appointed Supreme Allied Commander; Vice Admiral D'Escadre Barjot, Commander of the French Mediterranean Fleet, was named deputy. Lieutenant General Sir Hugh Stockwell was designated the commander of land forces. General Andre Beaufre, his deputy, was also the commander of all French land troops. The naval and air force joint command structures were similarly organized, with each service under British command with a French deputy. (11)

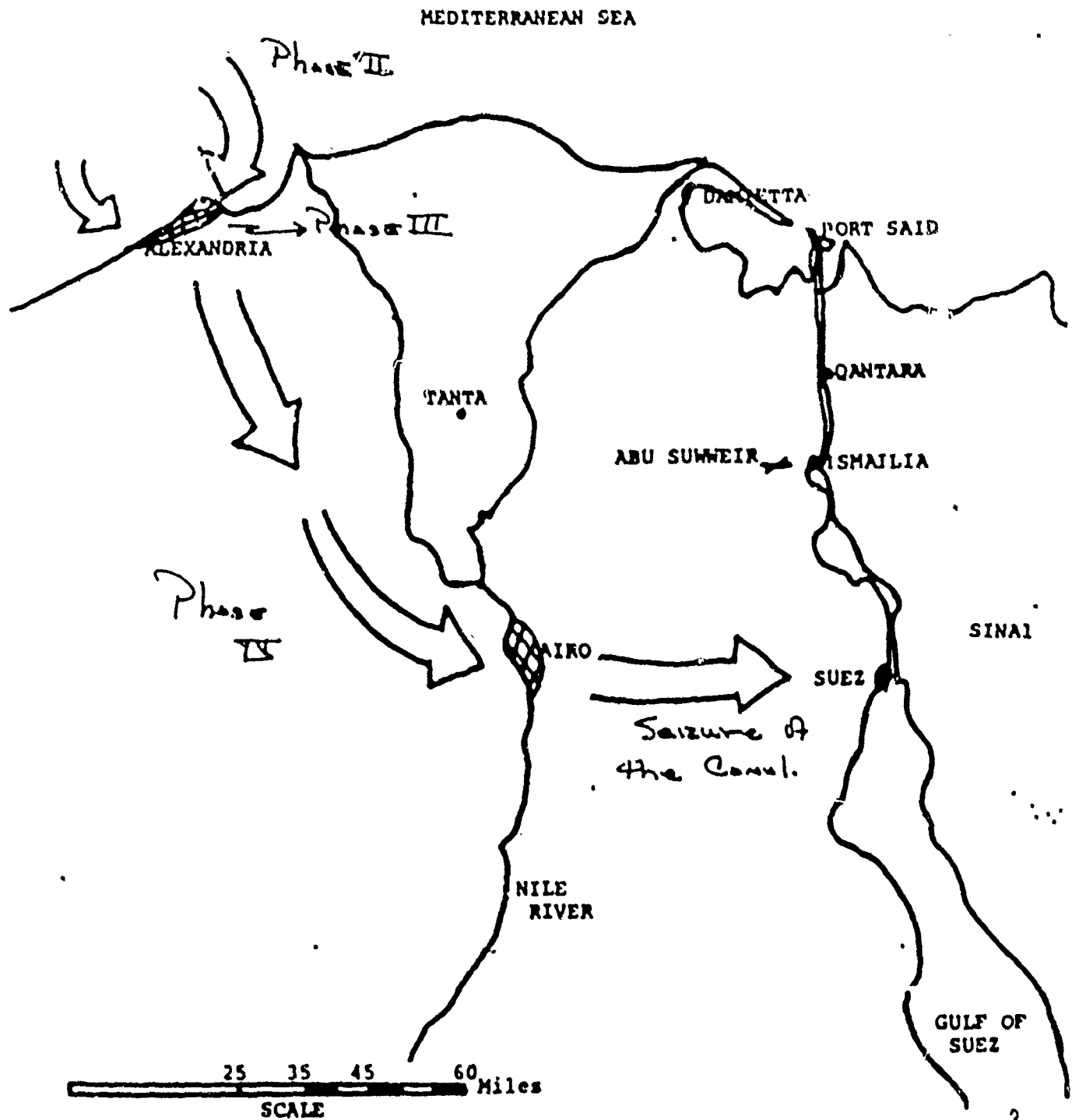
By 5 August the joint staff was working in the old Second World War apartments under the Thames River preparing the plan for joint operations against Egypt. (12) As will be seen, the selection of this planning site foretold the type of operation that was to be planned. The staff translated the political aims of the operation into operational objectives and determined the conditions that would

constitute success. In this operation the declared aim was: "to mount joint operations against Egypt to restore the Suez Canal to international control." (13) This aim appeared a straightforward operation to occupy the canal; however, the unstated, overriding, political aim of both Britain and France was the removal of Nasser and installation of a regimen less hostile to the West. (14)

The desire by the leaders of the British and French governments to topple Nasser dictated that the center of gravity for the operation would have to be the defeat of Egyptian Armed Forces and the occupation of Cairo. (15) This meant that a relative quick strike by lighter, more transportable forces against key targets in the canal that would provide control of the Suez would not be possible. The desire to topple Nasser took away military options that would have enabled the allies to act quickly to capitalize on the initial popular support for action prior to the worldwide diplomatic pressure to settle the dispute by negotiation.

Prior to the Suez nationalization, the bulk of Egypt's land forces had been either positioned in, or oriented to defense of the Sinai against the Israeli threat. However, with the saber rattling and overt actions by the British and French, Nasser had increased the Northern Egyptian Command to a fully operational level and had begun pulling forces from the Sinai to defend approaches to Cairo from Alexandria and the canal. (16)

It was estimated by the Combined Staff planners that,



LOWER EGYPT

FIGURE 2



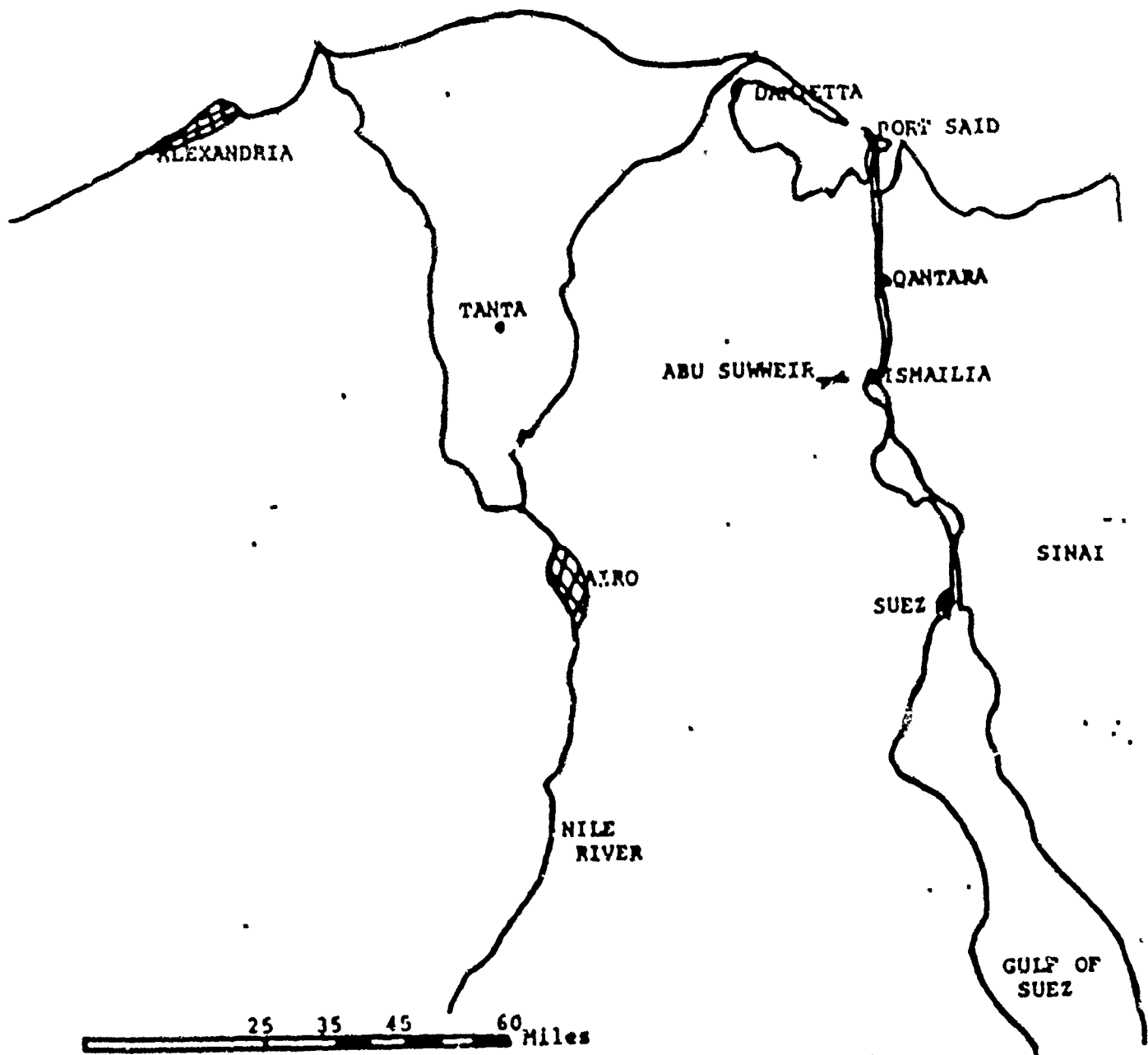
while the Egyptian armor forces may not be able to fully execute mobile operations, they would pose a formidable obstacle if the units were fought from defensive positions. (17) Given this estimate of enemy strength and capability, it was proposed to execute a World War II style amphibious operation, with heavy forces landing at Alexandria and then proceeding to Cairo. (18)

The plan, named "Musketeer" had four phases. The first phase would be a 2 day air operation designed to destroy the Egyptian Air Force. A coordinated air and land assault would secure Alexandria the next day. Over the next week forces would be put ashore and assembled for the final assault on Cairo. (19) (Figure 2)

The plan envisioned bombing to destroy Egyptian aircraft and the airfields from which they operated in order to gain air superiority. The assault phase had a planned shore bombardment by naval forces as a prelude to the assault of Alexandria. Airborne operations would secure the flanks of the operational area and an armored breakout would move toward Cairo and the climactic battle with the Egyptian forces. It sounded like a another D-Day, 1944.

The plan was approved on the 8th of August by Eden and confirmed shortly thereafter by Mollet. (20) D-Day was set for 16 September, with air action to begin on the 13th of the month. (21) The force began assembling to move, with the British 3d Armored Division preparing to embark in Britain and forces in Cyprus, Malta, and Algeria assembling for movement.

MEDITERRANEAN SEA



LOWER EGYPT

Figures 3

However, dark clouds were beginning to loom over the entire endeavor. Tremendous political pressure was being brought to bear on the British and French not to take military action to resolve the crises. The United States was pressing hard for a negotiated settlement. President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Dulles viewed the issue as "a business dispute over the control of a public utility." (22) Eden's public support was steadily eroding at home. In the time Nasser had controlled the canal, the predicted economic collapse had not taken place. The canal had continued to pass traffic without interruption. As such, Eden's political support was also thinning, and he was struggling to hold what support he had. (23) The inability to respond to the nationalization quickly was beginning to exact a penalty -- loss of support and will of the British public.

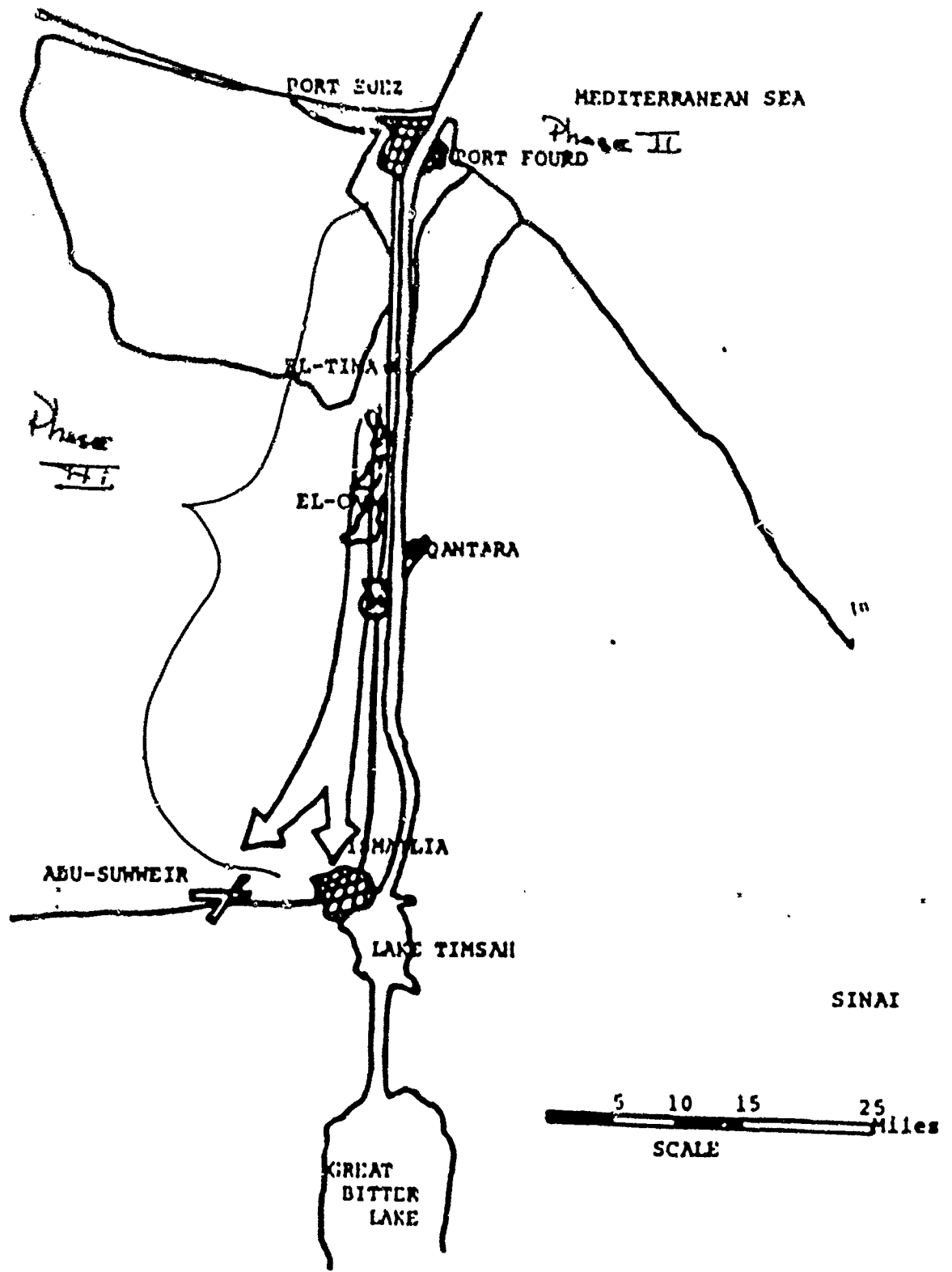
The difficulties in assembling the large force, its necessary transport means and logistic support caused a postponement of D-Day to 25 September. Again time was Eden's enemy. While the French continued to be resolute, Eden soon visualized the magnitude of the civilian and military casualties that were going to result from the aerial and naval bombardment, and from the subsequent assault against a large fortified city. He correctly foresaw the outcry this would cause at home and internationally. He ordered the military objective changed from Alexandria to Port Said, a smaller city that appeared to be less well-defended. (Figure 3) Selection of Port Said also

focused the assault against the canal and its control, after which Nasser's Army and Cairo could be moved against it if it was necessary.

This alteration was more than a change in objective. The concept of the operation began to shift from a full scale invasion and war to destroy the Egyptian Armed Forces, to a "police" action with limited objectives. Limitations were to be placed on the freedom of action of field commanders. In sum, political issues were going to take front seat over military issues.

The revised plan was dubbed "Musketeer (Revised)." A centerpiece to the planning for its execution was that it was to be conducted "cleanly" with as few Egyptian and friendly casualties as possible commensurate with attaining the military objectives of the operation. (24) Ironically, the revised concept could have been executed earlier had the risk of employing a lighter force been taken or had Eden and Mollet not directed that an aim of the campaign was to eliminate Nasser.

The details of the revised plan were filled out during September and early October 1956. The concept was based upon a sequenced campaign. The campaign included an expanded air operation of 5 days to destroy the Egyptian Air Force. The air offensive included a psychological bombing campaign to create an atmosphere of hysteria in the Egyptian people to either force Nasser from power or, at the least force him to negotiate. The 5 days would also allow time to transport the assault force from Cyprus for the amphibious



THE NORTHERN CANAL

Figures 4

operation. The air phase would be followed by an air assault to secure Ports Said and Fouad for the offloading of the heavy forces. The armored forces would then move quickly to secure the canal and then push on to Cairo if necessary. It was hoped that the canal could be secured in 4 to 10 days. (25) (Figure 4)

By this time the steady erosion of support for the operation had become a flood which threatened to sink Eden and his plans before they could be executed. Division within Eden's Conservative Party was deep, and the majority of its members were becoming disenchanted with a military solution. Critics of the plan questioned the elimination of Nasser; and, if that was successful, they believed that the concept for a post-Nasser government was vague. In the face of the continued opposition at home and the strong sentiment against British and French views worldwide, Eden came to accept the fact that a negotiated settlement under the auspices of the United Nations might be the only possible solution. He agreed to talk to the Egyptians; Mollet reluctantly concurred. (26)

Military planning and force preparations, however, continued unabated and the invasion date was only delayed until mid-October -- not cancelled -- while the United Nations attempted to resolve the crisis.

It is now time for the final actor to make an entrance onto the stage. Israel had not been sitting by idly observing the activities of the other parties concerned. She had been taking military action against Palestinian and

Egyptian forces in the Sinai and Gaza Strip. The purpose of these operations was to eliminate the fedayeen (Palestinian guerrillas) as a threat and to destroy their operations and supply bases. Israel was not at all displeased by the prospect of military operations against Egypt. The growing military capability of the Egyptian Armed Forces -- particularly, the Air Force -- was an serious concern. Tensions had grown to the point that Israel and her Prime Minister, Ben-Gurion, considered conflict inevitable.

Ben-Gurion's conviction that war was imminent led to his decision that a preemptive strike was necessary. He established as his aims the destruction of fedayeen bases in the Gaza to eliminate their threat of commando raids on Israel, to free the Gulf of Akaba for Israeli shipping, and to tarnish Nasser's military prestige to prevent a unified Arab campaign to destroy Israel. (27) Ben-Gurion believed that the time to attack was right. Much of the world was focussed on the Suez situation. The super powers, meanwhile, were engrossed in their own affairs: the United States on its presidential election and the Soviet Union on crushing the Hungarian uprising. On 25 October he ordered secret mobilization as he laid the foundation for the conspiracy that Israel, France, and England hoped would deceive the world. (28)

A special relationship between France and Israel had evolved over a period of several years. In the early 1950s French socialists had developed a feeling of solidarity with the governing socialist party of Israel and had taken on the

responsibility to provide arms to help that struggling nation survive. The relationship had continued as France remained Israel's most reliable arms supplier. After the nationalization of the canal, the two countries began working closely together. France was interested in alternatives to British assistance, as that ally began to appear less firmly committed to a military enterprise to regain control of the canal.

French leaders did not confide to Eden their growing collusion with Israel. Eden was not a friend of Israel. The current Israeli leadership was comprised of the same individuals who had fought a terrorist war against the British and were still regarded as terrorists by many senior British leaders. Eden also knew, that if he allied himself with Israel, Britain's influence with Arab nations of the Middle East would be severely damaged. Had he known that France had been conferring with Israel he may not have been pulled into the military alliance with France. As it was, France had assured itself that it would have a war, one way or another. If England pulled out -- a situation which was looking all the more likely -- then they could side with Israel. The question was not if Egypt was going to be attacked, but when and by whom. (29)

By early October the crisis had been ongoing for 10 weeks. Military forces were benefiting from the time to train and sharpen their skills, but it was difficult to keep the soldiers' intensity at peak level. Reservists were becoming particularly outspoken in their desire to be



demobilized. While the majority of the French people still favored intervention, the British were firmly on the side of negotiation. However, Eden still believed it was necessary to act. He wanted to right the wrong done to England and her prestige, and that included Nasser's removal from power.

Against this backdrop and the growing tensions in the Middle East being fueled by Israeli concerns over threat of a combined Arab strike against them, the British learned of the collusion between the Israeli and French governments. At this point Eden was not as quick to rule out an alliance with Israel as long as the alliance remained secret. (30) The French then presented a proposal that would provide the basis for British and French intervention in the Canal Zone. The Israelis would launch a preemptive strike against Egypt in the Sinai. The conflict would endanger the continued operations of the canal. Under the pretext of protecting the Suez, Britain and France would demand that both nations withdraw from an area of 10 miles around the canal. The wording of the ultimatum would be such that Egypt could not possibly accept the demand. The allies would then occupy the canal to protect it and to ensure that operations would continue without interference or damage. In sum, a great fraud was being planned that would amount to an annulment of the nationalization act and would ensure that the Suez Canal would be returned to control of the European powers. Eden was enthusiastic and accepted the concept as presented. (31) Britain, France and Israel had established an alliance among themselves to force Egypt to drop its claim to the

canal (32)

The plan to coordinate the actions of the three conspiring nations was simple and rather straightforward. It was agreed that the operations could be executed by 29 October 1956. The Israeli strike across the Sinai had been previously planned and was ready for execution. The Anglo-French intervention would require the execution of the current "Musketeer (Revised)" campaign plan.

The only modification made to these existing plans was the incorporation of allied support to the Israeli plan. While Israel was confident that she could defeat the Egyptian ground forces, the capability of the Egyptian Air Force was a concern. Israel feared that the Egyptian Air Force might be able to use its long range capability to bomb Israeli territory. Total commitment of the Israeli Air Force to support of ground operations left Israeli rear areas without adequate air cover. The allies agreed to provide Israel 65 fighters and pilots during the initial phase of the campaign. These forces were to provide additional air cover until destruction of the Egyptian Air Force could be completed during the first phase of the intervention. (33)

For the campaign to commence by the agreed date, General Stockwell, who had not been informed of the collusion plan until the 26th of October, had to begin embarking forces immediately. As a result, ground forces were aboard ship, and naval and air force elements were assembled and ready to strike within hours of the Israeli

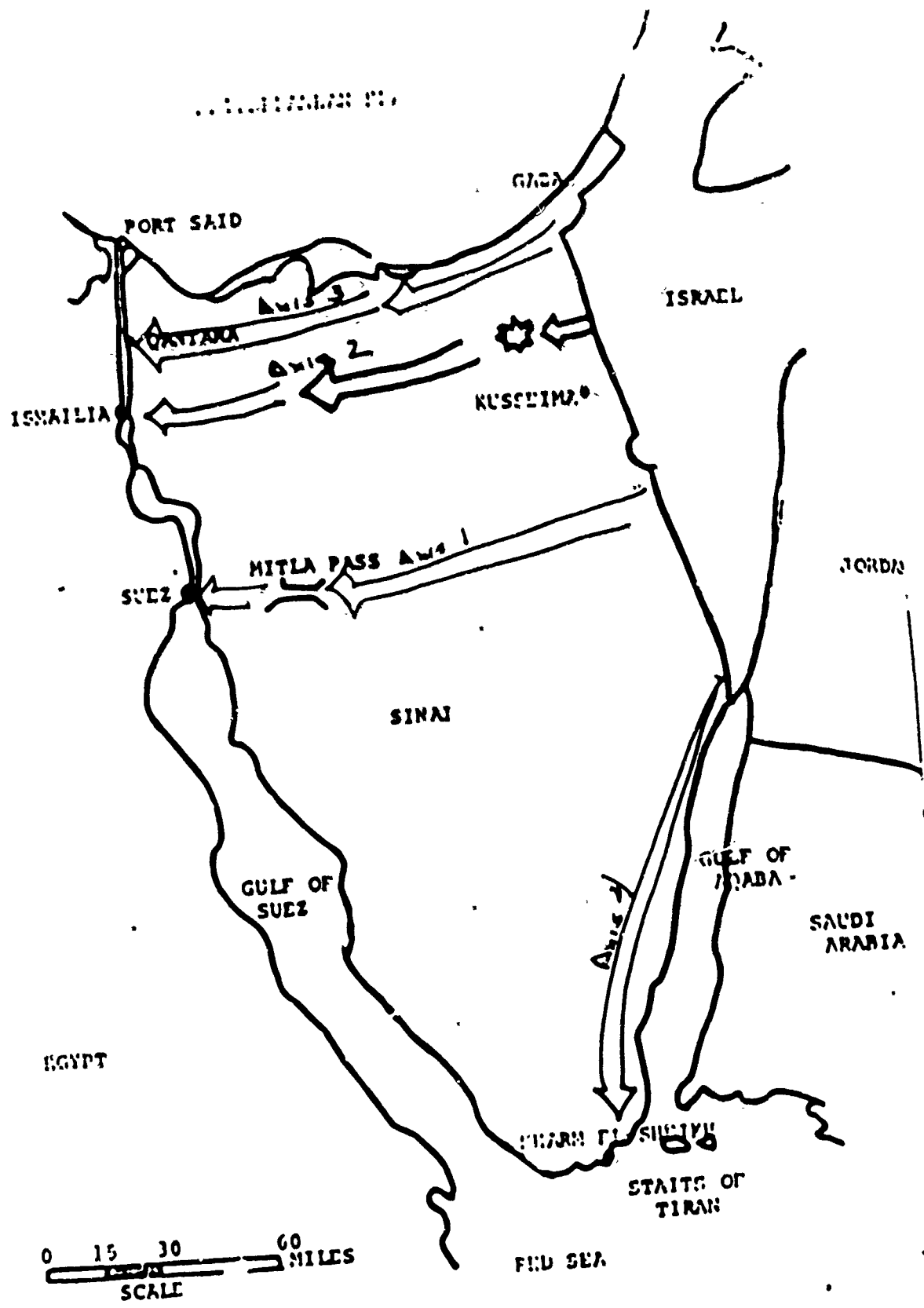


FIGURE 5

attack -- prior to announcement of the ultimatum by the British and French governments.

At twilight on the 29th of October Israeli forces attacked in the Sinai. Moshe Dyan, Chief of the Israeli General Staff, had clearly stated his objectives: create a military threat to the Suez Canal by seizing objectives in its proximity; capture the Straits of Tiran; and, confuse the organization of Egyptian forces in the Sinai to bring about their collapse. (34)

Dyan's intent was simple. Defeat the Egyptians as quickly as possible and achieve complete control of the Sinai. Capture as much as possible of the enemy's equipment and to maintain the "aim" of the offense until the objective was gained. (35) His scheme of maneuver called for use of airborne forces deep to seize key terrain at Mitla Pass and rapid armored movements to penetrate and move rapidly to link up with the airborne. Strong points were to be bypassed and dealt with latter. The four axes of attack ensured complete control of the Sinai, to include the Gulf of Akaba, and the approaches from Egypt into the peninsula. One axis was from Kuntilla to Suez. The second from Kuseime to Ismaili. The northern axis was from Gaza to Qantara, and the southern from Eilat to Sharm-El-Sheik. (Figure 5)

The Israeli attack commenced with a parachute drop at the Mitla pass. The operation was executed as planned; however, resistance in some areas was stronger than expected. In fact, if Nasser had not thinned his forces in the Sinai, the fight could have been more difficult. In the

Final analysis, though, the Egyptian Army was being beaten, and the central question was whether the Egyptians would be able to offer enough resistance to allow time for the British and French to intervene.

Nasser was completely surprised by Israel's strike; and, when he fully realized it was more than another reprisal raid, he believed that the British were using the Israelis as their agent to defeat him. He concluded that the buildup action on Cyprus and Malta were deception operations and began reinforcing the Sinai with units he had only recently moved to protect Northern Egypt. (36)

On the 30th of October, the British and French announced their intent to intervene "...to safe guard the free passage of the canal...and that Anglo-French forces should be allowed to occupy key points at Port Said, Ismaila and Suez." (37) Israel accepted the ultimatum, Egypt did not. At last Britain and France could execute their cause celebre.

This time the allied military was prepared to respond. British and French Air Forces began operations on 31 October. They quickly gained air superiority and destroyed the Egyptian Air Force. The air phase of the operation continued until 5 November while ground assault forces were being transported from Cyprus.

The airborne operations at Port Said and Port Fouad on 5 November were completely successful. The Egyptian resistance was completely ineffective and both ports were secured that day. The next day the amphibious landings were

mostly administrative in nature. The biggest problem facing the British was the continued resistance by the Egyptian people who had been armed by the local officials. They continued to harrass the British as they tried to press on with the operation. A glaring deficiency in the plan was the lack of thought or planning of who and how to administer the port cities after they had been occupied. Eventually, the British had to turn to the Egyptian police chief to try to keep order. The police chief, however, had issued the order to arm the populace and still took his instructions from the national government even after his appointment by the British.

In spite of some difficulties everything was on schedule, and the breakout to Ismaili was well on its way to being executed. The armor had come ashore in the landing and the bridges out of the port cities had been captured intact. While there was still some resistance in Port Said, Port Fouad was quiet and French forces were in complete control.

The outcome of the crisis, though, would not be determined by military action. Whatever the military outcome, the operation was to be a defeat for the allies. The hoped-for collapse of public will and demand that Nasser negotiate a settlement or be removed from power did not occur. The transparent objectives of the intervention solidified Nasser's support among his people -- even with those who had opposed him and had been sympathetic to his downfall. The intervention and bombing quickly rallied

world opinion to Nasser's side. He realized that worldwide public opinion was his greatest force, and he manipulated it skillfully. He would be able to win battles his armed forces could not.

What had started as a politically and economically motivated confrontation would end as a result of the same elements. The intervention was causing serious economic strains in England, and the pound sterling was being sold at an unprecedented rate. Only intervention in the financial markets by the Bank of England had kept the exchange rate at a reasonable level. In the process, British reserves had fallen to less than \$100 million dollars. The value of the pound could only be sustained with a loan from the United States, and the U.S. would only assist if the Suez operation ceased. Additionally, the Soviet Union had bluntly threatened Britain and France with nuclear retaliation if they did not end their operations. (38)

At 1800 hours on the 6th of November, the allies accepted a United Nations resolution for a ceasefire and a UN-sanctioned international force to secure the Canal Zone. The ceasefire would be effective at 2400 hours that night. (39) In the last hours British and French forces made every attempt to reach as far south as possible along the canal. When the ceasefire became effective allied forces had reached as far as El Cap.

On 30 November, the first units of the UN Peacekeeping Force -- two companies of Danish Infantry -- arrived and began occupying positions between Anglo-French forces and

the Egyptians. By 22 December the last of the allied forces had been withdrawn; and, the attempt by Britain and France to reestablish their Egyptian domination and topple Nasser had failed.

In the end, what were the results of the events that had played out in the six months since Nasser had nationalized the canal?

Egypt: Egypt was the victor of the Suez crisis. Her control of the canal was secure. Britain and France were no longer threats to either her control of the Suez or her political leadership. The overwhelming military defeat suffered in the Sinai and at Ports Said and Fouad were hidden by the crushing political victory Nasser had achieved as a result of the negotiations to end the crisis. Nasser's position as leader in Egypt was not only reinforced and more secure than ever, but also his prestige had increased immensely. He became the Arab spokesman for pan-Arabism, took on the causes of anticolonialism, and emerged as a leader of the Third World.

Britain: Britain was the big loser. She completely lost her prestige as a world power. Nasser had not been toppled from power and the nationalization of the canal had not been reversed. It was obvious that England would never again be a dominant world player.

France: The Suez intervention was another in the long list of places that France would try to stem the tide of nationalism by military action. As in the other cases, she also failed in Egypt. Her primary objective of



eliminating Nasser as a voice for Arab nationalism and a supplier of arms to Algeria was not achieved. After the war, Egypt, along with other Arab countries who were incensed with French action, increased their aid to the Algerian rebels. (40) In the long term, France's realization that England was not a reliable partner and the US's failure to stand with her allies gave rise to the policies of independent action championed by Charles DeGaulle.

Israel: Unlike Britain and France, Israel achieved some of her objectives. She freed the Gulf of Akaba, destroyed the fedayeen bases and defeated the Egyptian Army. (41) In retrospect, though, the victories were hollow. Egypt's armed forces were rebuilt; no long-term deterrent effect had been achieved. Guerrilla raids would soon resume, and the need to repeat the preemptive strike into the Sinai would cause a repeat performance in little more than 10 years.

Despite the belief of many British and French military leaders that their forces had achieved a military victory that was ultimately lost politically, the game was over before one shot was fired. Nasser nationalized the canal because he correctly assessed that no one could or would stop him -- a lack of deterrence. Once he acted, the allies were incapable of quickly and forcefully mounting an operation against him. In the final account, in spite of the professional performance of the British and French soldiers and leaders, the objectives of the campaign were not achieved because the canal was, in reality, a means to

an end, not the end in itself. The ultimate objective was the removal of Nasser, and there was neither the will nor the forces available to accomplish that goal. All planning revolved around this central issue. The initial "Musketeer" was designed to accomplish it militarily. "Musketeer (Revised)" incorporated psychological warfare techniques to accomplish it. The tragic flaw was that it could not be accomplished. General Beaufre, Deputy Commander of Allied Ground Forces for the operation, correctly assessed this fact and believed that the operation was an attempt to solve a political problem by the military element of power without proper diplomatic efforts having been made to ensure the success of the operation. (42)

Beyond the desire to topple Nasser from power, there does not appear to have been a clear political goal for either Britain or France. What would have been the outcome if Nasser had been overthrown or the Canal Zone occupied? There was little thought given to who would replace Nasser, what that person's power base would have been or his legitimacy to govern. The reestablishment of colonial domination by Britain and France would not have been accepted by the international community. Britain could not afford to garrison the Canal Zone once it had been occupied; 80,000 soldiers had been removed from the zone only two years before because of the cost. To return to the status quo would not have been acceptable, either, since Nasser had shown he could run the canal and had acted the rational man. He had robbed the allies of a tyrant -- unlike the situation

with the United States and Manuel Noriega in Panama. Ultimately there was no objective by the time the operation unfolded. This resulted in the vacillation between the operations plans; the collusion with Israel; and, in the end, the lack of will on the part of Eden, both personally and politically, to continue the operation. (43)

At the operational level the most glaring failure was in intelligence. The overestimation of Egyptian capabilities caused military leaders to respond too cautiously. Light forces were available to respond and carriers and marines were in the Mediterranean, but the miscalculation of Egyptian ground and air capabilities forced planners to prepare for a more ponderous operation using armor forces. The resulting long preparatory phase provided time for Nasser and his supporters to manipulate public opinion to his advantage.

The lack of understanding of limited war by the operations planners and leaders multiplied the effect of the intelligence failure. The military failed to realize the need to act quickly. The allies' center of gravity was the will of their leaders and people. In the case of England, the will of both was broken and the result was defeat.

The lack of proper forces to strike quickly and forcefully was the culminating failure of the operation. The British government had systematically reduced its military forces since World War II -- reaping its "peace dividend," so to speak. In 1955 the military philosophy was to concentrate on nuclear deterrence and home defense. The

army was structured to meet its NATO commitments and to garrison widely scattered stations of the Empire. There was no strategic reserve. This paucity of forces spread units so thinly that there were few forces available for emergency deployment, and those that were were poorly trained and inadequately equipped to deal with modern weapons systems -- somewhat similar to Korea. The result was a garrison army focussed on an European battlefield incapable of responding quickly and forcefully to contingency operations. (44)

Finally a mistaken belief that air superiority and bombing alone would bring about an effective termination of hostilities was proven wrong. As the U.S. would learn again in Vietnam, air is effective as a show of resolve but must be integrated in overall operations to be decisive.

There are several political and operational planning lessons to be gleaned from this campaign. Most the U.S. has learned and applied in Just Cause. The lesson that is most appropriate at this time when the military force structure is being reviewed, is not to get caught in the same trap as the British. England was unable to deter Nasser because the military capability of the nation had not been kept prepared. Its force structure did not meet the needs of the nation. The forces were not properly equipped with sufficient modern weapons systems to meet the increasing threat from regional powers and want-to-be powers. The force was not adequately trained to be a ready and capable force. Additionally, viable alliances had not been maintained to ensure assistance and basing rights in

strategic areas. In the final analysis Britain was a regional power with worldwide interests. She did not have the will to provide the resources to the military to ensure its capability to protect those interests. If America is to continue to fulfill its responsibility to provide a stabilizing influence in the world and, at the same time protect its national interests, her political leaders must demonstrate the will to provide the resources required.

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