

THE HISTORY OF PEACEKEEPING IN THE SINAI DESERT  
1956-2002

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MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE  
Military History

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The Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) celebrated their twentieth anniversary in the Sinai Desert in 2002. During the past twenty years there has hardly been a shot fired in anger between Egypt and Israel, the antagonists the MFO is charged with keeping at peace. The silence along the international border in the Sinai has prompted a serious review of the MFO's continued relevance by the US Department of Defense. The MFO position, strongly supported by the governments of Israel and Egypt, is that the MFO is highly relevant and still necessary in the Sinai. This thesis seeks answers to this contradiction by reviewing the history of peacekeeping in the Sinai Desert. The three peacekeeping forces and the military, political, and diplomatic action that surrounds them is a reminder that peacekeepers do not make peace, nations make peace. The peacekeeping forces that have served in the Sinai have been highly effective. However, the root problem that brought them there in 1956 remains unresolved. Until the resolution of the Palestinian problem in Gaza and the West Bank, peacekeepers will be a necessity in the Sinai Desert.

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

THE HISTORY OF PEACEKEEPING IN THE SINAI DESERT, 1956-2002  
by MAJ Robert R. Kiser, 93 pages.

The Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) celebrated their twentieth anniversary in the Sinai Desert in 2002. During the past twenty years there has hardly been a shot fired in anger between Egypt and Israel, the antagonists the MFO is charged with keeping at peace. The silence along the international border in the Sinai has prompted a serious review of the MFO's continued relevance by the US Department of Defense. The MFO position, strongly supported by the governments of Israel and Egypt, is that the MFO is highly relevant and still necessary in the Sinai. This thesis seeks answers to this contradiction by reviewing the history of peacekeeping in the Sinai Desert. The three peacekeeping forces and the military, political, and diplomatic action that surrounds them is a reminder that peacekeepers do not make peace, nations make peace. The peacekeeping forces that have served in the Sinai have been highly effective. However, the root problem that brought them there in 1956 remains unresolved. Until the resolution of the Palestinian problem in Gaza and the West Bank, peacekeepers will be a necessity in the Sinai Desert.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

On 5 November 1956, Resolution 1000 (ES-I) was passed by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly. The resolution created a United Nations Force to supervise the implementation of resolution 997 passed on 2 November 1956.<sup>1</sup> Resolution 997 called for a cessation of hostilities between all belligerents on the Sinai Peninsula. This force was named the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF). In subsequent years, after a second UNEF force came into being, it became known as UNEF1.<sup>2</sup> Thus began the saga of peacekeeping in the Sinai Desert.

In the spring of 1956, after an Israeli raid into the Sinai in pursuit of fedayeen,<sup>3</sup> the head of the United Nations Treaty Supervision Organization (UNTSO) asked Major General (MG) E. L. M. Burns (Canada) to study the problem of interposing a military force between Egypt and Israel. The basic idea was not to be an occupying force but to be something of a trip wire to bring down international sanction before a full fledged war could erupt. The concept and force dispositions developed during this study were to be extremely useful later in that same year, when UNEF1 became a reality.

Forty-six years later, peacekeeping forces still patrol the Sinai. The Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) operate thirty two remote observation posts, and MFO coastal patrol vessels monitor traffic through the Straits of Tiran. The MFO is composed of soldiers from eleven nations and receives financial support from three others.<sup>4</sup> The organization has a heavy United States (US) presence including a support battalion (1st

US Support Battalion), an infantry battalion<sup>5</sup> and a brigade headquarters.<sup>6</sup> This year, the MFO celebrated its twentieth anniversary in the Sinai.

Recent initiatives by the US Department of Defense to cut back on forces committed to the MFO were met with dismay by the governments of Egypt and Israel. They believe that a peacekeeping force in the Sinai is still necessary and that the US must continue to be part of it.

The MFO is a significant part of the peacekeeping history in the Sinai, but it is by no means the only part. The relative success of the MFO is based in large part on the accomplishments of the organizations that went before it. Many of the lessons learned from UNEF1 (1956-1967), UNEF2 (1973-1979), and UNTSO (which had a peripheral role throughout the entire period) have been incorporated into MFO operations.

The peacekeeping units that have served in the Sinai have been remarkably effective. They remain relevant and necessary today. Their performance is all the more remarkable considering their ad hoc multinational organization, the precedent setting nature of UNEF1, the extremely volatile operational environments of both UNEF 1 and UNEF2, and the MFO's long term success in the political-diplomatic climate of the Middle East peace process.

The documentation of peacekeeping in the Sinai is extensive and quite detailed. In most of the published literature, the peacekeepers are seen as a small portion of a larger work detailing the diplomatic, political, or military history of the conflicts between Israel and Egypt. Bertil Stjernfelt's work on UNEF2,<sup>7</sup> and Mala Tabory's book on the formation of the MFO<sup>8</sup> are significant exceptions. Two of the best other works include: *Suez: The Twice Fought War* by Kenett Love<sup>9</sup> and *The Albatross of Decisive Victory* by



George Gawrych.<sup>10</sup> These and other works provide a wealth of secondary sources on the diplomatic, political and military events surrounding the peacekeepers. These will be supplemented with primary sources such as the extensive collection of UN documents available in the Combined Arms Research Library at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

This thesis will focus on the peacekeepers who have served in the Sinai, rather than adding them as an aside. There will be a chapter devoted to each of the major organizations (UNEF 1, UNEF 2, MFO). A chapter on the period 1967-1973 (when no peacekeepers were present) is crucial to a full understanding of the peacekeeping mission and is thus included. In addition, the military, diplomatic, and political history will be discussed extensively, to illustrate the mission and performance of the peacekeeping units, as well as their continued relevance.

### The Sinai

The Sinai Peninsula (see figure 1) is a desolate region of harsh climatic extremes. Geographically, it is bordered by the Mediterranean Sea in the north, the Suez Canal, Gulf of Suez and the Red Sea in the west, and the Gulf of Aqaba in the east. The Gulf of Aqaba empties into the Red Sea through the strategically vital Straits of Tiran in the southeast corner of the peninsula.

The peacekeeping units that have patrolled the Sinai over the past forty-six years have been forced to overcome the Sinai itself first, before turning to the task at hand. Similarly, peacekeepers have had to bear the burden of the recent history of the peninsula. Old colonial grudges, religious bias, nationalistic fervor and the Cold War all come together in the history of peacekeeping in the Sinai.

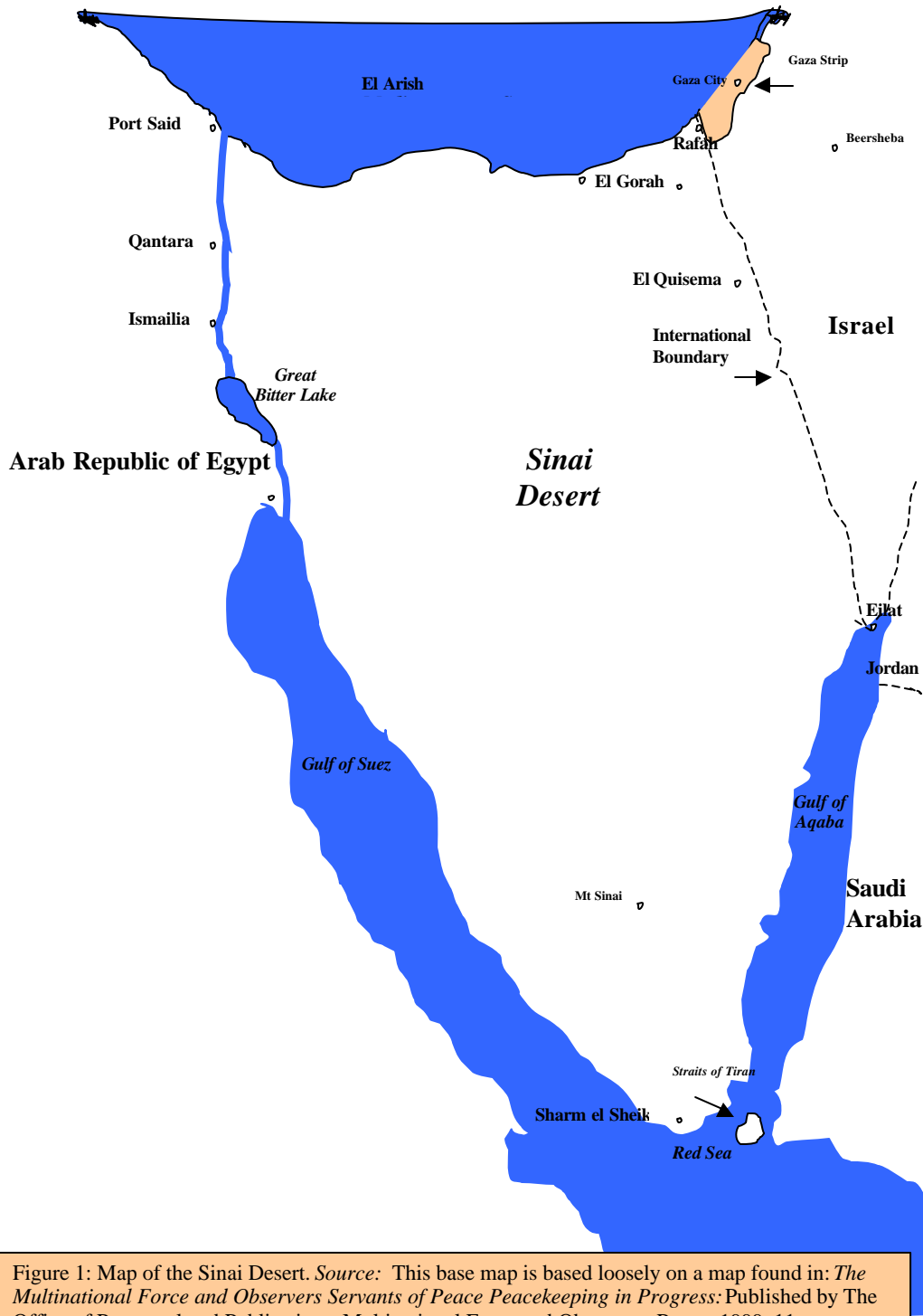


Figure 1: Map of the Sinai Desert. *Source:* This base map is based loosely on a map found in: *The Multinational Force and Observers Servants of Peace Peacekeeping in Progress*: Published by The Office of Personnel and Publications, Multinational Force and Observers, Rome, 1999, 11.

## Pre-1956

The roots of peacekeeping in the Sinai began with the digging of the Suez Canal, when the canal became a strategic waterway of unparalleled importance. The German Statesman Bismarck once referred to it as the “world’s jugular.”<sup>11</sup> Certainly, the British Empire came to see it as their jugular. The British Empire’s all-consuming focus on this region stemmed from the strategic value of the canal. This fact certainly shaped the historical events that led to the presence of peacekeepers there.

In 1875, the British government purchased the Egyptian owned stock in the Suez Canal Company, despite French opposition. In 1882, the British Army occupied Egypt to insure the security of the canal. An international treaty signed in 1888 at Constantinople defined the use of the strategically vital waterway and affirmed its essentially international character. Britain, for its part, saw the canal as a national strategic asset. A 1936 Anglo-Egyptian treaty codified British military control over the canal zone. The French, whose interests in the canal were those of its private investors, were content to allow the British to promote their interests.

As time passed, the Egyptian people began to see the canal as colonial exploitation of their country. To be sure, the Egyptians paid a high price in blood for the canal. An estimated 2.4 million workers dug the canal, in a process that was akin to slavery.<sup>12</sup> In 1951 the Wafd (Peoples Party) returned to power in the Egyptian Parliament. Shortly thereafter, the Wafd leadership demanded abrogation of the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian treaty and fedayeen (guerilla) cells began attacking British installations in the canal zone.

In July 1952, a group of young Army Officers, known as the “Free Officers,” led by General Mohammed Naguib, forced Egyptian King Farouk to abdicate and leave the country. Gamel Abdel-Nasser was prominent in the Free Officers and became the Interior Minister in the new republic. Naguib named Nasser Prime Minister in 1954. Later that year, under pressure from the Nasser government, the British agreed to withdraw all of its troops by 1956. A clause in the agreement allowed for a return of British forces if the canal was threatened.

### 1956

The year 1956 was momentous in the history of Egypt. On 13 June 1956 the last British troops left Egypt. Their departure ended seventy-four years of foreign occupation.<sup>13</sup> At the head of Nasser’s domestic agenda was the financing of the Aswan “High Dam” project. The British built the first Aswan Dam, known as the “Low Dam” in 1902, then raised the Dam’s height in 1912 and again in 1934. Still, it provided insufficient reservoir space to store water for lean rainfall years and to hold back the Nile in flood years. The High Dam was Nasser’s answer to feeding an exploding population and providing power for further development of the economic potential of the Nile Delta. Financing of the dam proved difficult. The Egyptian economy could not underwrite a public works project of this scale. The Egyptian government, for its part, could not provide a plausible guarantee of loan repayment to international creditors.

Nasser’s efforts to build the High Dam went back to his time as interior minister. He tried every diplomatic trick in his repertoire, including playing the superpowers against each other, to get it built. All of his efforts went for naught. When a final attempt

to get the US to subsidize the project failed, Nasser concluded that Egypt would have to go it alone.

One potential source of income that remained untapped was the transit fees from the Suez Canal. The Suez Canal Company was an Egyptian company doing business within Egypt but owned entirely by foreign entities. Unfortunately, the concession granted by the previous government for operating the canal, was not due to run out until 1968.<sup>14</sup> Revenues from the canal could more than pay for the canal itself and the High Dam.

A careful analysis of the international situation by Nasser and his inner circle concluded that neither Britain nor France was in a position to intervene in Egypt. The British Army was stretched thin with commitments in Cyprus and elsewhere in the Middle East. The French were heavily engaged with insurgents in Algeria. The Superpowers were preoccupied with each other and had showed only passing interest in Egypt, from Nasser's perspective.<sup>15</sup>

#### Nationalization of the Suez Canal

On 26 July 1956 in a lightning operation, elements of the Egyptian Army seized control of the canal. The operation coincided with a radio broadcast to the Egyptian people in which Nasser announced its nationalization. Shortly thereafter, the Egyptian Foreign Minister Aly Sabry released the following statement:

The nationalization of this company in no way affects Egypt's international obligations. . . . The freedom of shipping in the Suez Canal will in no way be affected. Furthermore, there is no one more anxious than Egypt to safeguard freedom of passage and the flourishing of traffic in the canal.<sup>16</sup>

The British and French were infuriated. Grasping for some rationale (and means) for wresting control of the canal from Nasser, they took their case to the United Nations. Months of diplomatic wrangling led to no satisfactory solution. A British diplomat summed up the feeling of the British Government: “We would like to be beastly to Mr. Nasser, but we just haven’t figured out a way to do it.”<sup>17</sup>

The fact of the matter was that Nasser had pulled a master stroke. Nationalization of the canal was legal, under the eminent domain principle.<sup>18</sup> Canal operations did not skip a beat (despite Western warnings that canal operations would collapse of mismanagement) and the Egyptian Government tendered an offer to all shareholders (including the British Government) of the Suez Canal Company to pay them the value of their shares based on the close of the Paris Bourse on 26 July.

British and French protestations to the UN Security Council fell on deaf ears. There was simply no case for intervention. The canal was secure and operating within agreements on shipping developed at the international conference in Constantinople in 1888. The Suez Canal Company was an Egyptian company. The fact that the primary stockholder (3/8 of all stock, but less than a majority) was the British Government was superfluous.<sup>19</sup>

### Israel

On the opposite end of the Sinai was the fledgling Jewish state of Israel. Israel’s victory over Egypt and its allies in the 1948 war was a prime reason for Nasser’s rise to power. Israel, like Britain and France had serious differences with Nasser’s Egypt. However, Israel’s differences were very separate issues from those of the European powers. Relations between France and Israel were cordial and a significant portion of

Israel's military equipment was French. Relations between Britain and the Jewish state were strained at best, due to Israel's former status as a British Mandate.

The Israeli War of Independence (also called the "nekbah," or catastrophe, by the Arab states) had ended in a UN brokered armistice in 1948. No formal treaty of peace was signed. Fedayeen cells, operating out of the Sinai and Gaza strip were a constant irritation on the southern flank of the Jewish state. Israeli merchant vessels were prohibited from transiting the Suez Canal, based on the lack of a peace treaty with Egypt.<sup>20</sup> To further aggravate relations with Israel, Nasser closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, sealing Israel off from trading with the east.

The Egyptian position on the Straits of Tiran was that it was wholly contained within the borders of Arab states. Further, Israeli access to the Gulf of Aqaba through the Port of Eilat was contested by the Arab nations, who contended that the Israeli Army had illegally occupied the head of the Gulf of Aqaba after the Armistice in 1948. Israel considered Eilat part of their sovereign territory

The Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion had repeatedly stated that closure of the Straits of Tiran would bring war. The problem for Ben Gurion was that the fledgling Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) could not guarantee victory on the ground nor the security of its airspace from the Egyptian Air Force.

### Intrigue

In the first half of the 1950s, Israel felt compelled to attack Egypt for a variety of reasons, primarily over shipping and border security. Israel needed allies in order to successfully mount a significant operation. Britain and France needed a reason to attack Egypt, to redress their grievances over the canal. As noted earlier, an article of the 1954

troop withdrawal agreement between Great Britain and Egypt provided British troops with the “right of return” if the canal was threatened. However, it was the French who hit upon a plan to create a threat to the security of the canal. The plan included an Israeli seizure of the Sinai, providing the requisite threat. The French convinced the British that, with an adequate deception plan, Anglo-French-Israeli collusion remained secret.

The plan, codenamed “Musketeer,” called for Israeli forces to seize the Sinai in a two-week campaign, thus “threatening” the security of the canal. A combined Anglo-French task force would intervene, “securing” the canal. To facilitate the plan, the French delivered sixty new Mystere IV fighters to the IDF, and a considerable amount of other equipment, including 300 trucks. A follow on phase of the operation would include removal of Nasser from power.

### War

In late October 1956, the IDF seized the entire Sinai and the Straits of Tiran in a ten day operation. French and Israeli aircraft decimated the Egyptian Army, and British bombers operating from Cyprus destroyed the Egyptian Air Force on the ground. Despite UN resolutions to end the conflict, Anglo-French airborne troops seized Port Said on the pretext of saving the canal zone from disruption by the Israeli action. The timing of the operation was disrupted by a startlingly swift Egyptian military collapse in the Sinai. Still, with Israel in control of the Sinai and the Straits of Tiran. Anglo-French forces were poised to seize the rest of the canal zone. The deception plan failed to fool anyone for long, and Nasser remained more popular than ever, albeit in a poor military position.



## International Reaction

On 4 and 5 November, the international community attempted to step in and end the conflict. The resulting actions of the UN, manifested by resolution 1000 (discussed previously) authorized the UNEF1. Diplomatic intervention by the United States, operating behind the scenes and through the UN, brought about a ceasefire on 7 November. According to Kennett Love, “The United Nations Emergency Force and American pressure were the fulcrum and the lever that pried first the Anglo-French troops and then the Israelis out of Egyptian territory.”<sup>21</sup> The cease fire prevented complete occupation of the canal zone. The creation of an international peacekeeping force was an unprecedented move, but absolutely essential in restoring Egyptian sovereignty while addressing the concerns of Great Britain, France and Israel.

This first action by peacekeeping forces in the Sinai was a harbinger of their effectiveness over the years. Absent the UN force on the ground, British and French Paratroopers would have certainly completed the occupation of the Canal Zone. The airborne operations on 6 November were proof of their intention to secure a strong negotiating position. The peacekeepers continued presence during the subsequent negotiations helped to prevent provocative acts by either side that might have otherwise negatively affected the talks.

The introduction of the UNEF1 was a groundbreaking event in world affairs that continues to have repercussions up to the current day. Dag Hammarskjöld, a future Secretary General of the United Nations, characterized UNEF1 as “more than a observer corps, but in no way a military force temporarily controlling the territory on which it is

stationed.” This is a concept that is common place today, but revolutionary in 1956, even if it was not appreciated as such at the time.

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<sup>1</sup>E. Lauterpacht, *The United Nations Emergency Force* (London: Stevens & Sons, New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960). The sponsors of the resolution were Lester Pearson the Canadian Foreign Minister and representatives from Columbia and Norway (Kennett Love, *SUEZ: The Twice fought War* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), 648). It is interesting to note that those three nations are still heavily involved in peacekeeping in the Sinai. Canada providing an Air Traffic Control Unit and Staff officers, to include the Commanding General of the MFO, Columbia provides an entire infantry battalion, Norway provides staff officers, including the Chief of Operations.

<sup>2</sup>The United Nations Emergency Force inserted in 1956 hereafter will be cited as UNEF1 and the United Nations Emergency Force inserted in 1973 as UNEF2 as an expediency. Numerous authors make reference to “UNEF1” or “UNEF2”; however, most official documentation refers to either force as simply UNEF, since they were not serving at the same time.

<sup>3</sup>Literally translated, fedayeen is the plural of the Arabic word fedayee “one who sacrifices himself for his country.” The term fedayeen was used to describe Arab irregulars fighting against Israel from bases in Gaza and The Sinai.

<sup>4</sup>United States, Columbia, Fiji, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Hungary, Uruguay, Italy, France and Norway contribute troops. Switzerland, Japan and Germany contribute monetarily.

<sup>5</sup>Up until July of 2001 the US Infantry Battalion was rotational and drawn from 25th ID, 10th ID, 82d Abn, 101st Abn. Beginning in July 2001, the commitment is filled by the Army National Guard.

<sup>6</sup>United States Army Task Force Sinai is a Brigade Headquarters dual hatted with key portions of the MFO General Staff. The Commander, a Department of the Army selected Brigade Commander is dual hatted as the Chief of Staff of the MFO.

<sup>7</sup>Bertil Stjernfelt, *The Sinai Peace Front* (London: Hurst and Company, 1987).

<sup>8</sup>Mala Tabory *The Multinational Force and Observers in the Sinai* (London: Westview Press, 1986), 5.

<sup>9</sup>Kennett Love, *SUEZ: The Twice fought War* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), 156.

<sup>10</sup>George W. Gawrych *The Albatross of Decisive Victory* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000).

<sup>11</sup>Love, 156.

<sup>12</sup>Nasser was fond of saying that 120,000 Egyptians died digging the canal, a gross exaggeration. He used this figure more than once to inflame public opinion and it became fact in the minds of the Egyptian people. Canal Company figures recorded about 1300 Egyptian deaths. *Ibid.*, 349.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 344.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 335.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 377.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 363.

<sup>18</sup>The fact that Great Britain nationalized her steel and other industry between 1947 and 1951 under Eminent Domain provides an ironic twist to British logic in calling this nationalization illegal.

<sup>19</sup>The value of the stock at the time of nationalization was about 67 million USD. Egyptian assets frozen upon nationalization in British banks amounted to twice that. Compensation was not an issue and Nasser insured that the world knew it. *Ibid.*, 367.

<sup>20</sup>The Egyptians cited the 1888 agreement on use of the canal to support her prohibition of Israeli traffic. Article I of the convention states “That the canal should be free for the passage of all ships, in any circumstances.” Article X states that the first article “will not interfere with the measures his Majesty the Sultan (Ottoman Empire, of which Egypt was a part) or his highness the Khedive might find necessary to take for securing by their own forces the security of Egypt.” *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>21</sup>Love, 648.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE UNITED NATIONS EMERGENCY FORCE

It is difficult to imagine a situation less conducive to the introduction of a peacekeeping force than that which faced MG E. L. M. Burns as his white UN DC-3 touched down at Cairo on the 8 November 1956. UN resolutions on 2 and 5 November authorized the formation of United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF1). British and French airborne and seaborne forces had invaded Egypt on the sixth. A shaky ceasefire was less than twenty-four hours old, and fighting between Anglo-French troops and Egyptian irregulars continued in Port Said.

#### The Players

The first task of the UNEF Commander was consultations with Egyptian authorities, to gain consent for conditions by which UNEF1 would help in separating the belligerents. The first principle established for the UN peacekeeping forces was to secure the permission of the host nation for their presence on Egyptian soil.<sup>1</sup> Although this was a simple concept, it was the subject of much conversation and some controversy in 1956.

Host nation consent and the concept of a multinational peacekeeping force raised multiple questions. If consent of the host nation was a prerequisite for UNEF1, could the host then eject them at any time? Who would decide when the mission was complete? Since Israel, Britain, and France were in possession of the territory in question, should they be consulted? What were the rights of the nations providing forces? Could they opt out at any time? Could the host nation dictate which countries could provide forces? The

groundbreaking nature of UNEF1 led to considerable confusion and extended consultation over these and other points.

Slowly, the UN codified conditions by which UNEF1 would serve in the Sinai. Host nation consent was determined to be absolutely necessary. Israel was particularly adamant on this point, as were many of the nonaligned nations. Former colonial powers were no longer permitted to invade countries to “establish peace” or “keep order.”

The UN asserted its right to name member nations of the UNEF1 peacekeeping force. However, Pakistan and certain elements of the Canadian Army (The Queens own Rifles) were excluded from UNEF1 at the behest of the Egyptian government.<sup>2</sup> The General Assembly (or other authorizing body, such as the Security Council) would vote on completion of a mission. However, it was recognized that a peacekeeping force could not out stay its welcome.

President Nasser and Secretary General Hammarskjöld agreed that consultation would precede any major decisions by either side. Although Hammarskjöld would have liked to have put this detail in writing, Egypt would not agree to any hint of restriction of her freedom to demand UNEF1 withdrawal. This point had major implications prior to the 1967 war.<sup>3</sup>

In early November of 1956, Egypt still had reservations regarding the introduction of UNEF1. In fact, all of the parties involved had a different take on UNEF. Their reservations were not so much on the UNEF1 purpose, but on what they were actually going to be able or allowed to do. Nasser was first and foremost interested in getting British, French, and Israeli troops off Egyptian soil. He was also very concerned about

the composition of UNEF1. Though he did not have the military power to demand conditions on deployment, he made demands anyway.

The Egyptian President did have some leverage. Winter was closing in on Western Europe and the Egyptians had blocked the Suez Canal. Egypt's Arab League brethren, Syria in particular, had shut down the flow of oil through pipelines to the Mediterranean. Under the status quo, only thirty-six percent of the fuel needed to heat British and French homes for the winter was reaching the home ports, and reserves were not nearly sufficient.<sup>4</sup> Though beaten in the canal zone, Nasser was threatening to turn Cairo into another Stalingrad. All things considered, further military operations were not attractive for anyone involved.

Conceding their eventual withdrawal, the British demanded that they be allowed to clear the canal, so that shipping could resume. The Egyptians viewed any British participation as an attempt to legitimize the whole operation. The demand was rejected and the British acquiesced. US engineers eventually did the job.<sup>5</sup> In the British Parliament, the opposition party harangued Prime Minister Eden, who had been less than forthcoming on the extent of collusion with Israel.<sup>6</sup> The British Lion was without claws and forced to limp home in disgrace.

The French, who first advocated military action with both the British and Israel, and had the least to gain or lose in the whole affair, were silent.<sup>7</sup> French paratroopers, withdrawn to Cyprus, were exceedingly bitter over what they viewed as another in a long string of betrayals by politicians since 1940. They sold their captured Soviet block small arms to Cypriot terrorists, who promptly turned them on the British

The Soviet Union was predictably appalled at the extent of capitalist malice and made sure that the Third World knew it. Their hands full with the uprising in Hungary, the Soviets had been unable to directly influence events in the Middle East throughout the crisis. However, not content to stay on the sideline and interested in deflecting attention from Eastern Europe, they verbally blasted all of the colluders at every opportunity. The British tried to portray an imminent Soviet threat to the area, but the Eisenhower administration did not buy it, noting that the Soviets had shown a preference for working through surrogates, as in North Korea. The irony of the American analysis was probably not lost on the British.

Israel was to prove quite tough in negotiations to resolve the crisis. From the outset, Israeli goals had been: destruction of the fedayeen and their support structure in Gaza and Sinai, and freedom of navigation through the Straits of Tiran.<sup>8</sup> Ben Gurion recognized that he would have to withdraw from the Sinai, and he began the process almost immediately. However, forfeiting Sharm El Sheik and the shipping access that came with it was out of the question without UN guaranty of freedom of navigation for Israeli shipping. Israel also insisted that they could not withdraw from Gaza without “a reasonable, if not watertight, assurance that Gaza would not again become a fedayeen nest.”<sup>9</sup>

In the United States, the Eisenhower administration was firm in their conviction that the status quo, prior to hostilities had to be re-established. This position was identical to the official UN position. One concession was made to Ben Gurion: Israel would have freedom of navigation through the Straits of Tiran. Assuring free passage for Israel through the straits was not much of a reach, given that a 1951 UN resolution had affirmed

the Israeli right of innocent passage there.<sup>10</sup> The US was also on record as considering the Egyptian blockade illegal.<sup>11</sup> In the meantime, the Suez Canal remained closed to Israeli shipping.<sup>12</sup>

Opposition in Britain and Israel was bitter. In the end, neither was in any position to stand up to the United States. Hard feelings over the Suez crisis put a chill on Anglo-US relations.<sup>13</sup> Israel attempted to bring pressure on the US through its supporters in the US Congress, but to no avail. The Eisenhower administration was adamant and in the end had its way. Nasser conceded freedom of passage through the Straits of Tiran by not electing to blockade it. The presence of UNEF1 soldiers provided a convenient excuse not to enforce an Arab League resolution to blockade the Gulf of Aqaba. Egypt did not agree to any convention that recognized Israeli right of passage.<sup>14</sup>

#### Entry of UNEF1

MG Burns completed his consultations with the Egyptian government on 8 October with a workable agreement. Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld summed up the mission of this new entity: “the basic function of the United Nations Emergency Force, to help maintain quiet, gives the force great value as a background for efforts toward resolving such pending problems, although it is not in itself a means to that end.”<sup>15</sup> This remarkable analysis of the true value of UNEF1 is still valid when discussing the mission of peacekeepers in the Sinai today.

Advance parties for the various national elements of UNEF1 began landing at Abu Suweir military airfield outside of Ismailya on 15 November. The first unit on the ground was an advance party of forty-two peacekeepers from the Danish contingent. Advance elements of the Columbian and Norwegian contingents followed on 16



November. On that same flight was the Secretary General himself, who traveled to Cairo to continue consultations on outstanding issues regarding UNEF1.<sup>16</sup>

UNEF1 was one of the most remarkable rapid deployment operations in history. Hammarskjöld began planning on 4 November, anticipating implementation. The General Assembly authorized the force on 5 November and implemented on the seventh troops began landing on 15 November with follow on forces flowing into the staging base at Naples, Italy. By mid-December, a credible force was in place. UNEF1 went from a nonexistent entity to a military organization on the ground and in contact with hostile forces within forty-five days. UN members showed remarkable cooperation. The US provided critical airlift for personnel and equipment from all points on the globe. Italy provided equally critical staging facilities and base support in Naples.

Anglo-French forces agreed to withdraw from Port Said and Port Fuad (the sister city to Port Said on the east bank of the Canal) as soon as a viable UNEF1 force was in the area. They made good on that commitment, with all Anglo-French forces gone by 22 December.<sup>17</sup>

Israeli forces had already withdrawn thirty miles east of the canal by the time of the initial UNEF1 deployments. By January 1957, IDF forces had withdrawn to the original 1948 Armistice line, with the exception of Gaza, Sharm el Sheik, and a narrow strip along the Gulf of Aqaba (see figure 2). UNEF1 closed in behind the withdrawing IDF, taking control of Gaza on 7 March 1957. The last IDF unit moved back into Israel on 16 March 1957.<sup>18</sup>

### Composition of UNEF1

The UN authorized MG Burns to recruit officers for his staff as an expedient. He was not however, authorized to recruit from any of the five permanent members of the Security Council, for political reasons.<sup>19</sup> The UN Secretary General asked for nations to volunteer self contained units.<sup>20</sup> Twenty-four nations answered the call; troops from Brazil, Canada, Columbia, Denmark, Finland, India, Indonesia, Norway, Sweden and Yugoslavia were accepted.<sup>21</sup>

Brazil, Denmark, Norway, India, Columbia, Sweden, Canada, Yugoslavia, and Indonesia all provided infantry battalions.<sup>22</sup> The Canadians and Indians also provided combat service support units to include medical, administrative, maintenance and signal.

The composition of UNEF1 changed constantly as individual nations withdrew units, added personnel, and additional requirements were identified and filled. UNEF1 maintained liaison offices in Cairo, Tel Aviv, Beirut, and Naples. Naples served as the main logistics staging base, where units and equipment gathered before movement into theatre.

### Disposition of Forces

As noted earlier, the final pieces of the Israeli withdrawal in March 1957 were Sharm el Sheik and the Gaza Strip. Fedayeen units had operated freely out of Gaza prior to the October 1956 invasion. This fact lent some credence to the Israeli claim that the territory was nothing more than a staging base to attack Israel. Ben Gurion proclaimed to the Knesset (the Israeli Parliament) “no matter what happens, Israel will not submit to the restoration of the status quo in the strip.”<sup>23</sup> In March 1957 Israel submitted to US pressure and announced to the UN that they would hand over the Gaza strip to UNEF1.

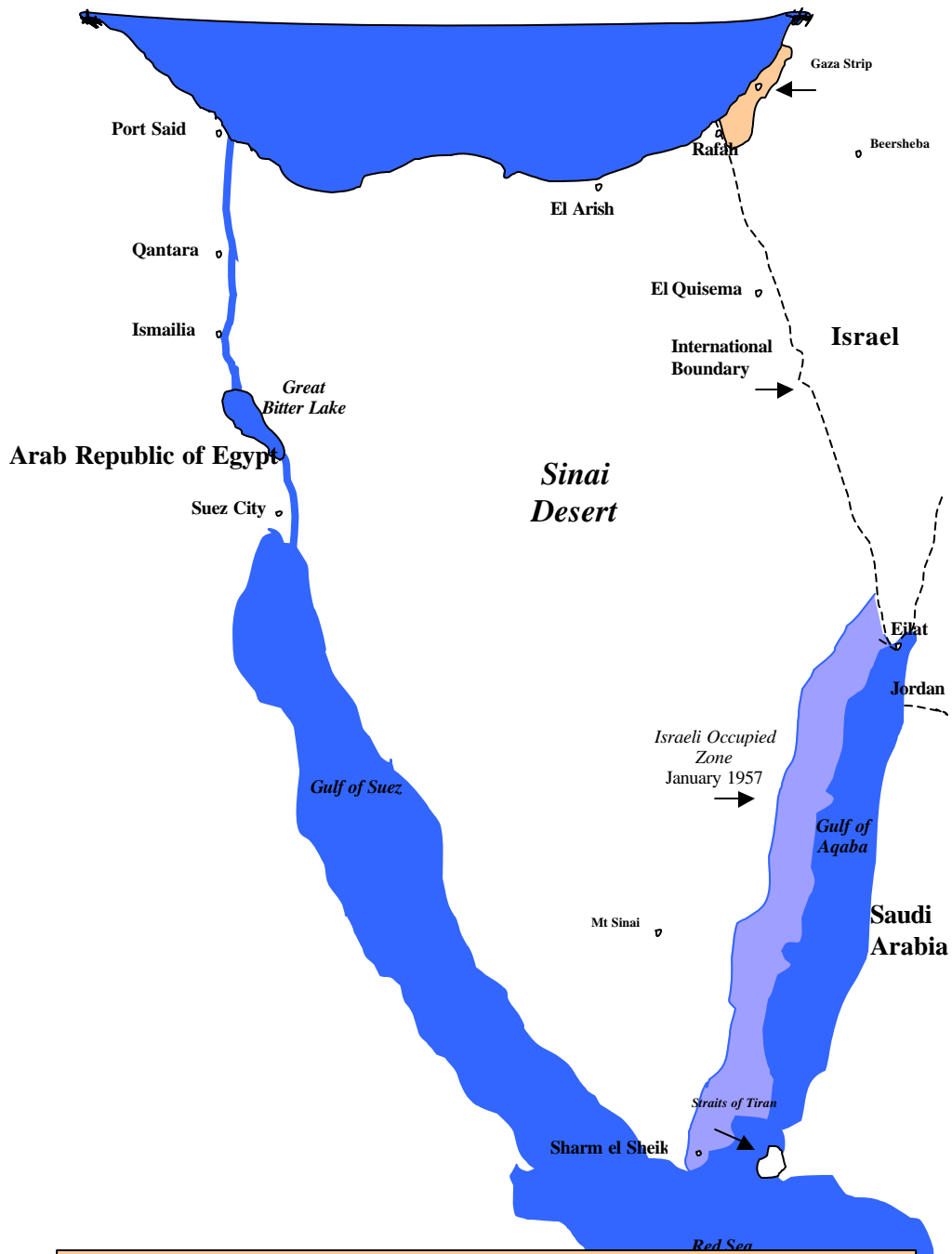


Figure 2: Israeli occupied zone, January 1957. *Source:* The map is based loosely on a map found in: *The Multinational Force and Observers Servants of Peace Peacekeeping in Progress*: Published by The Office of Personnel and Publications, Multinational Force and Observers, Rome, 1999, 11. Operational detail is based on text found in: Sydney Bailey, *Four Arab Israeli Wars and The Peace Process*, (New York: St Martins Press, 1982), 164.

With UNEF1 in charge, the tactical disposition of forces became critical. The history of fedayeen activity across the Gaza border while UNTSO monitored the 1949 Armistice led the IDF to view UNEF1 with suspicion. Further, the IDF had a history of handling observers roughly; all of which led to a charged atmosphere.<sup>24</sup> Clearly, the success or failure of UNEF1 depended largely on preventing fedayeen activity along the armistice line in Gaza. Israel surrendered Gaza only under heavy diplomatic pressure from the US. A resumption of fedayeen raids there would have almost certainly triggered a return of the IDF in force.

MG Burns deployed the Danish-Norwegian, Indian, Brazilian, and Columbian infantry battalions along the armistice line in the Gaza Strip along with one company from the Swedish battalion. The remainders of the Swedish battalion and UNEF1 headquarters were located in Gaza City itself.

A Canadian cavalry squadron and a Yugoslavian reconnaissance battalion patrolled the international border from Rafah down to Eilat on the Gulf of Aqaba. UNEF1 maintenance and administrative units operated out of a centralized facility in Rafah, with a Finnish security detachment. A Canadian flight detachment was located at El Arish with a Brazilian security detachment.

A Finnish company patrolled the Sharm el Sheik–Ras nas Rani area adjacent to the Straits of Tiran.<sup>25</sup> UNEF1 initial dispositions reflected the emphasis on easing tensions in the Gaza sector. Four battalions manned the thirty-two miles of front in the Gaza strip in an attempt to prevent any fedayeen penetration of the Israeli border. The dense population and relatively vegetated terrain made concealed approaches to the

border possible. A tight system of observation posts and a comprehensive patrol plan was necessary.

The international border between Quisema and Eilat, a distance of over 100 miles was patrolled by only two cavalry squadrons. This sector provided excellent armored avenues of approach, but the sparse population and open, desolate, terrain on both sides of the international border made infiltration unlikely.

A relatively small element patrolled Sharm el Sheik. If Egypt had decided to close the Straits of Tiran, no amount of UNEF1 force could have kept it open. The Finns manning Sharm El Sheik were there to maintain the UN flag and report any interruption of traffic through the straits, should that occur.

UNEF1 made no attempt to observe the Sinai in depth or the coast of the Gulf of Aqaba. These tactical dispositions were in keeping with the UNEF1 mission. The interior of the Sinai was devoid of military value and the Gulf of Aqaba was easily monitored by logging traffic in and out of the Straits of Tiran. Subsequent peacekeeping missions in the Sinai would differ significantly.

#### The Mission from 1956 to 1967

As UNEF1 forces built up in the area around Port Said, they gradually took up positions between Anglo-French forces and the Egyptian population. From November 1956 to March 1957 they busied themselves with security tasks, primarily in the canal zone. In late March 1957, an Indonesian infantry company closed in behind the last Israeli vehicle to leave the Sinai.

From that point, UNEF1 was in charge of the Sinai and Gaza. Their mandate was to maintain the peace and report any violation of the armistice agreement to the UN. The

General Assembly of the UN authorized UNEF1. Thus, notification would go to the Secretary General's office. The Secretary General would then determine whether to bring the problem before the General Assembly for consideration.

UNEF1 took charge of Gaza on the 7 March. The streets quickly filled with pro Nasser demonstrators, who became riotous. Danish and Norwegian peacekeepers used tear gas to restore order. It was immediately apparent that an Egyptian administrative presence would be necessary to maintain calm in Gaza.

Nasser promptly named a governor for Gaza. The Israelis and the Eisenhower administration considered this move to be a clear violation of the agreement on Gaza. Israel had agreed to turn Gaza over to UNEF1 and believed that Gaza would be administered by same. US diplomats had forced the Israeli hand on this matter based on that understanding.<sup>26</sup> Calm returned once Hammarskjöld met with Nasser and received assurance that the Egyptian Army would not make moves to return to Gaza. In fact, the Egyptian Army did not move back into Gaza until just before the 1967 war. This minor episode was an early indicator of the effectiveness of UNEF1. MG Burns quickly recognized the necessity of Egyptian administration and Hammarskjöld executed effective damage control by insuring that the Egyptian Army did not follow the Egyptian administrator back into Gaza. The Egyptian Army and its support for the fedayeen, was the real crux of the issue for the Israelis, who were otherwise ambivalent about who administered the area.<sup>27</sup>

While UNEF1 focused on eliminating fedayeen infiltration in the Gaza sector, they were also concerned about relations with the IDF. Although not in a hurry to get in firefights with the Israeli army, MG Burns did not want it published that UNEF1 troops

would use force only in self defense. In his view, that would lead to Israeli troops shoving UNEF1 aside and doing as they pleased. Israeli refusal to allow marking of the armistice line, nor allow UNEF1 troops on her territory did not bode well.<sup>28</sup> Numerous incidents between IDF and UNEF1 troops took place between March and June 1957. However, in each case, IDF troops withdrew when asked by UNEF1 officers, and eventually calm prevailed.<sup>29</sup>

In fact, UNEF1 did a remarkable job of maintaining “quiet” throughout its tenure. Peace reigned in the Sinai from 1957 to 1967.<sup>30</sup> The apprehension on both sides turned out to be for nothing. The concept of a peacekeeping force turned out to be solid. Unfortunately, lessons on the political underpinning of a peacekeeping force were yet to be learned.

#### Withdrawal of UNEF1

By the spring of 1967, UNEF1 was down to 1800 troops in much the same dispositions as 1957. Egypt was now committed to a mutual defense pact with Syria and the situation on the diplomatic front, despite multiple initiatives, was virtually unchanged from 1957. The Sinai was quiet; Israel’s disputed border in the Golan Heights was not. On 7 April 1967, a ground clash between Israeli and Syrian forces in the Golan Heights precipitated an air battle between the two responding air forces. In the resulting dog fight, Israeli jets shot down six Syrian jets, chasing the remainder all the way back to Damascus.<sup>31</sup> Israel and the nations of the Arab League took turns denouncing each other at the UN.<sup>32</sup> Israeli Foreign Minister Aba Eban warned ominously that Syria had “filled their quota of violence and that retribution was at hand.”<sup>33</sup>

In early May 1967, heavy Egyptian Army traffic delayed a UNEF1 convoy from Cairo, at Port Said. After finally receiving clearance and arriving in Gaza, the convoy commander reported large scale Egyptian troop movement into the Sinai. The current UNEF1 Commander, MG Indar Jit Rikhye (India), was not overly disturbed, noting that “it was the season for an exchange of verbal threats, demonstrations, parades across the border, and high tension.”<sup>34</sup>

On May 16, MG Rikhye received a letter, by courier, from General Mohammed Fawzi, Egyptian Army Chief of Staff. The letter stated that the Egyptian Army would be taking up positions along the Israeli border and asked for withdrawal of UNEF1 outposts. Rikhye was dumbfounded, but passed the communication along to UN Secretary General U Thant, who instructed UNEF1 to continue their normal routine. U Thant then conferred with Egyptian authorities and asked for a clarification. The letter delivered on 16 May, was characterized by U Thant as “unclear and unacceptable.” Sharm el Sheik was not mentioned, although the courier had instructed Rikhye to vacate that post verbally.<sup>35</sup>

U Thant took the position that UNEF1 would remain in place as it was or, if the Egyptians removed consent for the presence of the force, pull out completely. Late on the night of 16 May, U Thant received a cable from the Egyptian Foreign Ministry confirming that Egypt wished to terminate consent for UNEF1 presence on Egyptian soil. On the morning of 18 May 1967 the UN flag was lowered in Gaza. UNEF1 began withdrawing immediately. Initial planning was for a forty-five day operation. It would not take place without difficulty and tragedy.<sup>36</sup>

There is a school of thought on this episode that says that Nasser did not really want to remove UNEF1. His motivations were unclear to even his closest advisors,



including Foreign Minister Mohammed Fahmy. Fahmy contends that Nasser took the decision to remove UNEF1 without consulting anyone in the Foreign Ministry.<sup>37</sup> U Thant has been criticized for not convening the General Assembly or Security Council.<sup>38</sup> Of course, this line of reasoning assumes that Nasser really did not want UNEF1 out.

Clearly, Nasser felt that UNEF1 had outlived its usefulness. His instructions to MG Rikhye and the subsequent aide memoire to U Thant are prima facie evidence that he wanted UNEF1 out of the Sinai. The fact that the message was first passed through military rather than diplomatic channels is further proof of intent. Nasser was well aware of his agreement to consult with the UN before making any significant moves and he ignored that agreement. UNEF1 had no choice but withdrawal. Referring to the principle rule set for the deployment of UNEF1; host nation consent was withdrawn.

#### Straits of Tiran

From the first hint that UNEF1 may be withdrawn, Israel made sure that the entire world knew that a blockade of the Straits of Tiran meant war with Israel. Israeli Prime Minister Eshkol summed up his position in a note to the French and US governments: “Israel’s determination not to acquiesce in a blockade was solid and unreserved, and Nasser should be under no illusions.”<sup>39</sup> On 23 May, Nasser closed the straits to Israeli shipping. In a speech announcing the blockade, he noted: “the Jews threatened war. We tell them: you are welcome, we are ready.” Eshkol ordered a substantial mobilization and noted that “Israel will stop at nothing to cancel the blockade.”<sup>40</sup>

In his autobiography, Abba Eban intimates that the removal of UNEF1 from the Sinai was not altogether unpalatable to the Israelis. Removal of UNEF1 and closure of the Straits of Tiran was. He goes on to say that Moshe Dayan had suggested years earlier

that it might be better to secure the Straits through Israeli deterrence, without the UNEF1 presence.<sup>41</sup>

### War

On the morning of 5 June 1967, at 0845 (Cairo time), IDF aircraft launched a massive raid against Egyptian air bases across Egypt. Within three hours, the Egyptian Air Force ceased to exist. By 12 June, the virtual destruction of the armed forces of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria was complete. The IDF held the entire Sinai, Gaza, the West Bank and the Golan Heights. In a tragic postscript to the UNEF1 mission, fourteen Indian soldiers were killed in Gaza when the UNEF1 headquarters was shelled during fighting there. The withdrawal of UNEF1 was completed on 13 June 1967.<sup>42</sup>

On 27 June 1967, in response to criticism over his withdrawal of UNEF1, U Thant released his explanation. In short, he stated that after consultation with the members of the UNEF1 advisory committee and given the situation on the ground, there was no option to withdrawing UNEF1. Responding to particularly vehement criticism by Abba Eban, U Thant reminded Israel that its refusal to allow peacekeeping forces on the Israeli side of the border had placed UNEF1 in a position of weakness in regards to the designs of the host nation, Egypt.<sup>43</sup>

### Analysis

UNEF1 was a remarkably effective peacekeeping operation. Their rapid organization and deployment was an astounding feat. Their success in separating Anglo-French and Egyptian forces far exceeded what could reasonably be expected of this ad hoc organization. Following a remarkable deployment, UNEF1 established a long term

peacekeeping operation in an extremely austere environment, another remarkable achievement. Ten years of peace followed in the Sinai.<sup>44</sup>

UNEF1 accomplished their mission of maintaining quiet; diplomacy had a good backdrop against which to work. Despite the best efforts of the peacekeepers, the overall mission was a failure. The bizarre circumstance of their withdrawal, and the subsequent tragedy of the 1967 war, reflects poorly on the diplomatic underpinning of the mission. Abba Eban rates the UNEF1 withdrawal as a close second among causes of the 1967 war, behind Arab hostility.<sup>45</sup> Lessons were taken from the diplomatic failures and applied to subsequent peacekeeping missions in the Sinai. It would be six years before peacekeepers were reintroduced to the Sinai.

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<sup>1</sup>UN General Assembly Operations Report, A/3302 par 8. Hereafter, all UN documents will be cited in the following format: UN, (document number), (date), (page, where applicable).

<sup>2</sup>Sydney Bailey, *Four Arab Israeli Wars and The Peace Process*, (New York: St Martins Press, 1982) 158; Love, 649.

<sup>3</sup>Bailey, 159.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 651.

<sup>5</sup>Love, 651.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 652-655.

<sup>7</sup>Moshe Dayan, *Story of my Life*, (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1976) 184-185.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 201.

<sup>9</sup>Abba Eban, *Abba Eban: An Autobiography*, (New York: Random House, 1977) 236.

<sup>10</sup>UN S/2322, 1 September 1951.

<sup>11</sup>Charles Selak, Legal Status of the Gulf of Aqaba, *“The Arab Israeli Conflict”* Vol 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press) 709.

<sup>12</sup>Love, 670-71.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 655-667.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 669.

<sup>15</sup>Judith Rosner “The United Nations Emergency Force” (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963) 69; Bailey, 154.

<sup>16</sup>Love, 650.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 656.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 669.

<sup>19</sup>United States, France, Great Britain, Soviet Union, China.

<sup>20</sup>Complete units, such as Battalions. Cobbling together a unit from individual volunteers was deemed to be too time consuming. In today’s environment it seems incredible that the UN considered it at all, they did.

<sup>21</sup>Afghanistan, Brazil, Burma, Canada, Ceylon, Chile, Columbia, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Finland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Laos, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Rumania, Sweden and Yugoslavia.

<sup>22</sup>Denmark and Norway manned a composite Battalion under a single officer, alternately Danish or Norwegian.

<sup>23</sup>Ben Gurion is quoted by Kennett Love in his book, 667.

<sup>24</sup>Love, 670.

<sup>25</sup>Rosner, 128.

<sup>26</sup>Eban, 255-257, Bailey, 172.

<sup>27</sup>Eban, 257.

<sup>28</sup>Israel had declared the armistice agreement to be dead since 1954 in response to Egyptian closure of the Straits of Tiran, refusal to allow Israeli flagged ships through the Canal and continuous Fedayeen raids.

<sup>29</sup>Love, 670.

<sup>30</sup>Bailey, 173.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 189.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 190.

<sup>33</sup>Love, 681.

<sup>34</sup>Bailey, 191.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 193.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 197; Love, 680.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 193.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 193.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 196.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 196.

<sup>41</sup>Eban, 328.

<sup>42</sup>Avrahm Mezerik, "Suez Canal 1956 Crisis-1967 War," *International Review Service* Volume 14 (1969): 59.

<sup>43</sup>Israeli Foreign Minister

<sup>44</sup>Love, 680.

<sup>45</sup>Eban, 328.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE CEASEFIRE THAT WAS NOT: JUNE 1967- OCTOBER 1973

The period between the end of the 1967 war and the 1973 Yom Kippur War saw an absence of peacekeepers in the Sinai. However, this period is too critical to an understanding of the topic to leave out. The military action, political machinations and peace initiatives that took place between June 1967 and October 1973 set the conditions for war in October 1973 and the subsequent introduction of UNEF2.

#### Aftermath of The 1967 War

The aftermath of the 1967 war was and remains a primer in national politics, diplomacy, and human nature. The governments of the defeated Arab coalition tried to justify their cataclysmic failure to their populations, pledged revenge on the Zionists, and alleged collusion between the US, Great Britain, and Israel.

The West generally supported the Israeli position that a return to the 1949 armistice lines could only happen with recognition of Israel as a sovereign nation. In Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban's words, an elimination of the "fiction of Israel's non-existence." Eban expanded on this thought by demanding the peaceful settlement of disputes through "direct contact" between Israel and the Arab states. Both of these principles flew in the face of the Arab policy of "no negotiation" with Israel. When questioned about the Israeli take on this attitude, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan responded: "then there will be a new map, not of the Middle East, but of Israel. If they will not talk to us, we will stay where we are."<sup>1</sup>

The Soviet Union was vehement in its condemnation of Israel but silent in its embarrassment at the performance of client Arab armies. Soviet and Communist bloc nations withdrew their ambassadors from Israel and began a vigorous campaign in the UN to sanction Israel and force the withdrawal of the IDF to the 1948 armistice lines. The US blocked Soviet efforts, supported by the western democracies. The US position maintained that returning to the status quo prior to 5 June 1967 would leave in place all those forces that ignited the conflict in the first place.

Along the Suez Canal, the victorious IDF consolidated their gains. Israel finished the war with enormous hubris, having pulled off one of the quickest and cheapest victories of the 20th Century. Egypt came away feeling cheated and certainly did not display the characteristics of a defeated nation. The war was too short, too neat, and not nearly bloody enough to prompt the spirit of remorse and reconciliation that can lead to settling differences.

Israeli Prime Minister, Levi Eshkol, proclaimed the status quo established by the armistice of 1948-49 dead.<sup>2</sup> The IDF had provided the nation with new and imminently defensible borders on all fronts. The Israeli negotiating points had not changed much but their negotiating position was now immeasurably stronger.

Egypt was humiliated and defiant, with significant international backing in the form of the Soviet Union. Nasser, after temporarily resigning on 9 June, reaffirmed his refusal to negotiate or even speak with the Israelis. The diplomatic climate was nearly impossible for successful peace negotiations.

## Observers

In the UN, Israel and Egypt traded accusations regarding the ongoing violence along the canal. Both countries agreed that UN observers would be helpful. To this purpose, U Thant sought and received permission from both Israel and Egypt to place observers along the Suez Canal line. To implement the observer mission, he turned to LTG Odd Bull, Chief of Staff of UNTSO.<sup>3</sup>

LTG Bull prepared a group of twenty-six observers who began work on 20 July 1967.<sup>4</sup> These observers did little to stop the sporadic fighting that continued between IDF and Egyptian forces. The belligerents denied UNTSO boats or even freedom of movement (including communication) back and forth across the Canal. UNTSO personnel could do little more than report back to the UN. To be sure, these reports brought about diplomatic activity. However, that activity collapsed under finger pointing and accomplished nothing. There is no indication in the record that a reintroduction of UNEF1 was considered. Given the attitude of the Israelis toward that organization's performance in June, a return of UNEF1 would have almost certainly been unwelcome in the Sinai.<sup>5</sup>

Sporadic violence continued all along the Suez in the months to come. Most serious was the sinking of the Israeli Destroyer *Elath* off of Port Suez in October 1967. The Israelis responded with a three hour artillery barrage that destroyed one of only two operating Egyptian oil refineries. As with all of the other cease fire violations, both sides proclaimed innocence. Israel maintained that the *Elath* was in international waters, Egypt alleged that she was not. Israel claimed that the retaliatory artillery strike was precipitated by Egyptian artillery fire. Of course, Egypt denied this claim.<sup>6</sup>



Meanwhile, the Soviets were busy rebuilding the Egyptian armed forces at a rapid pace. As the Egyptian armed forces gained strength, engagement along the Suez became more frequent and more destructive. The restoration of forces and the knowledge that the Soviet Union stood ready to make good any losses further emboldened Egypt and kept both Israel and Egypt on a virtual war footing.

It is quite possible that U Thant and LTG Bull believed that the twenty-six peacekeepers sent to the Suez Canal line in the summer of 1967 would be the foothold for a larger contingent that would eventually separate the forces.<sup>7</sup> In any case, it was not to be. Neither Israel nor Egypt was seriously interested in settling their differences in a peaceful manner.

UNTSO observers were useful to both sides in order to help shut down military operations before they led to all out war, which Israel did not want and Egypt was not yet prepared. The number of observers fluctuated a bit from time to time and Bull requested as many as ninety observers in the fall of 1967.<sup>8</sup> All involved were aware that twenty-six, eighty, or eight-hundred would not be enough if the belligerents were not serious about peace.

#### UN Resolution 242

In November of 1967, the Security Council passed resolution 242, a masterpiece of ambiguity to which all sides could agree. This resolution has been the basis for all negotiations and arguments since. Below is an excerpt of the key points,

The Security Council,

1. Affirms that the fulfillment of Charter principles requires the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East which should include the application of both the following principles:

- (i) Withdrawal of Israeli forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict;
  - (ii) Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every state in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force.
2. Affirms further the necessity
- (a) For guaranteeing the freedom of navigation through international waterways in the area;
  - (b) For achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem;
  - (c) For guaranteeing the territorial inviolability of and political independence of every state in the area, through measures including the establishment of demilitarized zones.

In an effort to craft a resolution that all concerned could agree to, the Security Council wrote a document that each side could interpret to suit their own interests. Egypt still refused to recognize Israel; Israel refused to return any land without recognition.

Another provision of 242 was a request for the Secretary General to appoint an envoy to “establish and maintain contact” with the different parties in the region and assist their efforts toward a peaceful solution. Hammarskjöld named Gunnar Jarring, a Swedish diplomat, to the post. Ambassador Jarring’s energetic efforts throughout 1968 and 1969 on a variety of proposals, unfortunately, came to nothing.

### The War of Attrition

Along the Suez Canal, Israel began construction of extensive earthworks on the eastern bank to protect its soldiers against harassing fire and commando raids by the Egyptians. Construction began in 1968 and became known as the Bar-Lev line after Israeli Defense Minister Chaim Bar-Lev, its main proponent. The Bar-Lev line was an expensive and controversial undertaking, given the maneuver minded IDF. The sixty foot

high berm and fortified strong points rising above the canal was more than controversial to the Egyptians. It spoke of permanence.

While the Israelis constructed the Bar-Lev line, Egypt continued to build its armed forces with the help of the Soviet Union. The Egyptian Army mounted sporadic artillery and commando raids against the Israelis to maintain pressure and as training for the army. The Israelis responded by launching raids onto the west bank of the canal and eventually began retaliating with air strikes deep into Egypt.

In March of 1969, Egypt began a series of coordinated artillery and commando raids along the canal that Nasser labeled the War of Attrition. The Egyptian strategy held that the reservist based IDF could not maintain a protracted struggle. This heightened level of activity began to have a serious effect on the Israelis, prompting more frequent and more extensive retaliation.<sup>9</sup>

By the summer of 1970, the level of fighting between Egypt and Israel had become a matter of serious concern for the international community. Israeli air strikes the length and breadth of Egypt prompted a request for Soviet pilots by the Nasser regime. The Israelis claim to have shot down at least four Soviet piloted MIGs during this period.<sup>10</sup>

Alarmed by the increasing Soviet involvement, the United States sponsored an initiative that led to a cease fire in August of 1970. Egypt used this cease fire period to strengthen its surface to air missile (SAM) belt along the canal.<sup>11</sup> Israeli negotiators initially balked at even attending the US sponsored talks after discovering the Egyptian moves. In the end, the negotiations went nowhere.

On 27 September 1970, shortly after concluding an Arab conference to mediate a dispute between Palestinians and the Jordanian government, Gamel Abdel Nasser died. He was a patriot to his countrymen, a villain to the Israelis, consummate politician to some, snake oil salesman to others. No matter your opinion of Nasser, he had a stupendously significant effect on Middle Eastern and world politics. His successor was Anwar Sadat.

### The Year of Decision

Anwar Sadat was a fresh start for the peace process in the Middle East. He was open minded, realistic, and very suspicious of Soviet motives in aiding his nation. One of his first acts was to begin distancing himself from the USSR.<sup>12</sup> Sadat then began working to settle the dispute with Israel. In late December, 1970 he launched his “Initiative for Peace.”

Sadat’s initiative called for a phased Israeli withdrawal from the Suez Canal which would lead to a peace agreement between Israel and Egypt. Israel was suspicious of any process which started with giving up control of the Suez Canal. Moshe Dayan described the waterway as the world’s best tank ditch. Nonetheless, the Israelis indicated that they were ready for fresh discussions.

U Thant and Gunnar Jarring were both very hopeful that, for the first time, both sides were willing to talk. Jarring, determined to avoid previous pitfalls, asked for both sides to submit aide memoirs stating their intent. From Egypt, he requested that they commit to recognition of and peace with Israel. From Israel, he requested a written commitment to withdraw from Sinai and the Gaza Strip. Egypt complied immediately and Jarring was satisfied with Sadat’s assurances.

Israel hesitated. To help prompt a reply and keep the process moving ahead, Jarring, in consultation with U Thant and US representatives decided to show the Egyptian response to Israel: “If they want real peace . . . , we are ready for one too...If Israel withdraws to international borders, I am ready to negotiate the details and clauses of the final, permanent peace.”<sup>13</sup>

Israel did not reply until 26 February, and then refused to withdraw to the pre-1967 borders. The negative reply and almost rude language of the document shocked Jarring and U Thant. It was something of a surprise to the US as well. The evasive language of the Egyptian response convinced Israel that Sadat was not ready to negotiate seriously yet. Many in the Israeli leadership did not feel compelled to negotiate at all with Egypt, especially since Egypt would not communicate directly with Israel.

Sadat had termed 1971 the year of decision, meaning that a decision on settling with Israel peacefully or going to war would be made. 1971 and 1972 saw many initiatives from both Egypt and Israel. Some were promising, some not. Moshe Dayan authored one of the most promising: a limited withdrawal from the canal coupled with Egyptian commitment to a comprehensive peace and the opening of the canal, closed since 1967. It went nowhere, because it was torpedoed by other elements of the Israeli government, then ignored by the Egyptians.<sup>14</sup>

Sadat hoped to bring the US to apply pressure on the Israelis. Without formal diplomatic ties (Nasser had withdrawn the Egyptian Ambassador to the US), he opened unconventional ties with the Nixon administration. In the summer of 1972 he ejected all Soviet military personnel from his country. The move was part pique at the Soviets for not leaning on the Israelis, and part an attempt to move closer to the US. Sadat’s efforts

were to no avail, because the US-Soviet détente had brought Superpowers positions on the Middle East closer together, and in line with 242.<sup>15</sup>

As time went on, Israel withstood constant harassment along their northern borders, a plague of airline hijackings, and airport massacres at the hands of Arab terrorists. Hardliners in the government pushed policy towards a tougher stance in all negotiations. In September 1972, Palestinian terrorists killed eleven Israeli Olympians at the Munich games. The atrocity further hardened Israeli public opinion and policy.<sup>16</sup>

### Prelude to War

The IDF's victory in the 1967 war had left the Israeli people as well as its defense forces supremely confident. The Israelis concluded, with ample justification, that the IDF was more than capable of defeating any combination of Arab armies. This opinion was to some extent, shared by the leadership of the Egyptian Army and Sadat himself.

To break the deadlock, Sadat settled on a strategy of limited war. This was not original thought on his part. As early as 1969, Nasser had discussed a strategy of limited war in order to change the Israeli negotiating position. In April of that year a member of his inner circle of advisors, Muhammed Heikal, wrote an article for *al-Ahram* (a semi-official Cairo weekly newspaper) outlining Nasser's thoughts:

I am not speaking of defeating the enemy in war, but I am speaking about defeating the enemy in a battle . . . the battle I am speaking about, for example, is one in which the Arab forces might, for example, destroy two or three Israeli Army Divisions, annihilate 10,000–20,000 Israeli soldiers, and force the Israeli Army to retreat from positions it occupies to other positions, even if only a few kilometers back . . . such a limited battle would have unlimited effects on the war.

Heikal related that Nasser's objectives for this battle were to: 1) Destroy the myth of Israeli invincibility; 2) Shake the faith of the Israeli people in the ability of the IDF to

defend it; 3) Destroy the Israeli philosophy of “imposing” peace on the Arabs; 4) Change the US attitude towards the Middle East.<sup>17</sup>

At the time of his death in 1970, Nasser had still not implemented this version of his “limited war” theory. Given that Sadat was Nasser’s deputy, and that he eventually adopted a strategy nearly identical to that which Heikal documented in 1969, it seems certain that the author of Sadat’s strategy was Nasser.

Sadat took his first steps toward a strategy of limited war in October of 1972 when he fired the War minister, General Mohammed Sadiq, his deputy, and several other high ranking members of the armed forces. Sadiq had refused to countenance a limited attack across the canal, citing a likelihood of horrendous casualties for little gain. He favored all out war to return the Sinai, a task for which the Army was not ready. Sadat replaced Sadiq and the others with officers ready to execute his guidance.

By 1973, a relative calm had spread over the Suez Canal Zone. Sadat had enlisted the support of Syria, and the armed forces of the two nations began coordination to attack Israel from both north and south. In September 1973, the armed forces of both nations were ready. With the help of the Soviets, the Egyptian Armed Forces had developed one of the thickest concentrations of air defense systems ever seen, in the canal zone. The general scheme of maneuver was to isolate the canal zone from the Israeli Air Force by pushing SAM batteries right up to the waters edge, creating an air defense umbrella over the area of operations.

Operating without interference from the Israeli Air Force, the Egyptian army could use its massive advantage in artillery, tanks and infantry to seize a significant lodgment on the east bank of the canal. There they would consolidate and repel the

inevitable Israeli counterattacks. The army could then continue the attack if the situation seemed favorable or hunker down until the UN stopped the fighting.

On 1 October 1973, five days before the assault on the Bar Lev line, Sadat gave his War Minister, General Ahmed Ismail Ali a directive outlining his strategic thinking:

To challenge the Israeli security theory by carrying out a military action according to the capabilities of the armed forces aimed at inflicting the heaviest losses on the enemy and convincing him that continued occupation of our land exacts a price too high for him to pay.<sup>18</sup>

### Analysis

Peacekeeping forces are of use only when at least one belligerent will accept them on its soil. They can only be fully successful when both parties to a conflict accept their presence without undue duress. Peacekeepers facilitate peace, they do not, cannot, impose it.

Peace was not a tenable proposition in the Sinai from 1967-1973. Neither side was ready to make peace. The period is a good example of when not to impose peacekeepers. Quite possibly, there was no solution to the Israeli-Egyptian conflict at this point. Diplomacy couldn't work against the backdrop of near constant fighting along the canal, yet peacekeepers could not augment the diplomacy for the same reason. Clearly, the "ceasefire that wasn't" set the stage for a conflict that would bring both Egypt and Israel to the peace table, at the same time, and willing to compromise.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 153.

<sup>2</sup>Bailey, 247.

<sup>3</sup>United Nations Treaty Supervision Organization.

<sup>4</sup>Avraham Mezerik "Suez Canal 1956 Crisis-1967 War," 62.



<sup>5</sup>On top of withdrawing so precipitously, the Israelis claimed that Indian UNEF1 soldiers fought alongside Egyptian soldiers during the fighting in Gaza. The Indian commander admitted that Indian soldiers had been captured in Egyptian trenches, but had been merely seeking cover from Israeli aircraft. Bailey, 231.

<sup>6</sup>UN S /7930 add. 43, 26 October 1967.

<sup>7</sup>UN S / 8053 add. 3, 31 October 1967.

<sup>8</sup>UN S / 8053 add. 3, 31 October 1967.

<sup>9</sup>Dayan, 446-447; Bailey 288-289.

<sup>10</sup>Dayan, 449.

<sup>11</sup>Bailey, 279-280; Eban, 469.

<sup>12</sup>In a letter to Richard Nixon in December of 1970 he stated: “we are not within the Soviet sphere of influence . . . nobody can claim to be Egypt’s tutelary power . . . we take our decisions freely and independently”. Sadats quote is publish in Bailey, 291.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.,291.

<sup>14</sup>Eban, 474-476.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.,480.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.,483-484.

<sup>17</sup>Muhammed Heikal, 11 April 1969, this English translation is from “*The 1973 Arab-Israeli War: The Albatross of Decisive Victory*”by George W. Gawrych (Ft Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College, 1996) 9.

<sup>18</sup>Anwar Sadat, 1 October 1973, is from “*The 1973 Arab-Israeli War: The Albatross of Decisive Victory*”by George W. Gawrych (Ft Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College, 1996) 12.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE YOM KIPPUR WAR AND UNEF2

Anwar Sadat's bid to shift the diplomatic balance in the Middle East was given expression in the Yom Kippur war. The resulting three weeks of bloodshed shook the foundations of the Jewish State; brought a near military catastrophe to Egypt; and very nearly brought the superpowers into conflict. The course of this war set the conditions for the introduction of a second peace keeping force to the Sinai and peace between Israel and Egypt.

#### The War of Atonement

At precisely 1405 hours (Cairo time) on 6 October 1973, 2000 Egyptian artillery pieces opened fire on the Bar Lev line. The bombardment dropped 175 shells per second for fifty-three minutes on Israeli positions. The first wave of Egyptian infantry began crossing the Canal at 1420. When dawn broke on 7 October, the Egyptian Army had 50,000 troops deployed to a depth of nearly four kilometers, and 400 tanks on the east bank.<sup>1</sup>

Tactical surprise was complete, operational and strategic surprise nearly so. The shock effect on the IDF and Israeli society was profound. Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir summed up her thoughts:

The shock wasn't only over the way the war started, but also the fact that a number of our basic assumptions were proved wrong: the low probability of attack in October, the certainty that we would get sufficient warning before any attack took place and the belief that we would be able to prevent the Egyptians from crossing the Suez Canal. The circumstances could not have possibly been worse. In the first two or three days of the war, only a thin line of brave young men stood between us and disaster.<sup>2</sup>

In the Golan Heights, the Syrians struck in coordination with the Egyptians, and the Israelis were no better prepared there. Israeli hubris had to bear much of the blame. The Israelis simply could not believe that the Arabs would attack when the outcome would almost certainly be a disastrous defeat on the order of 1967.

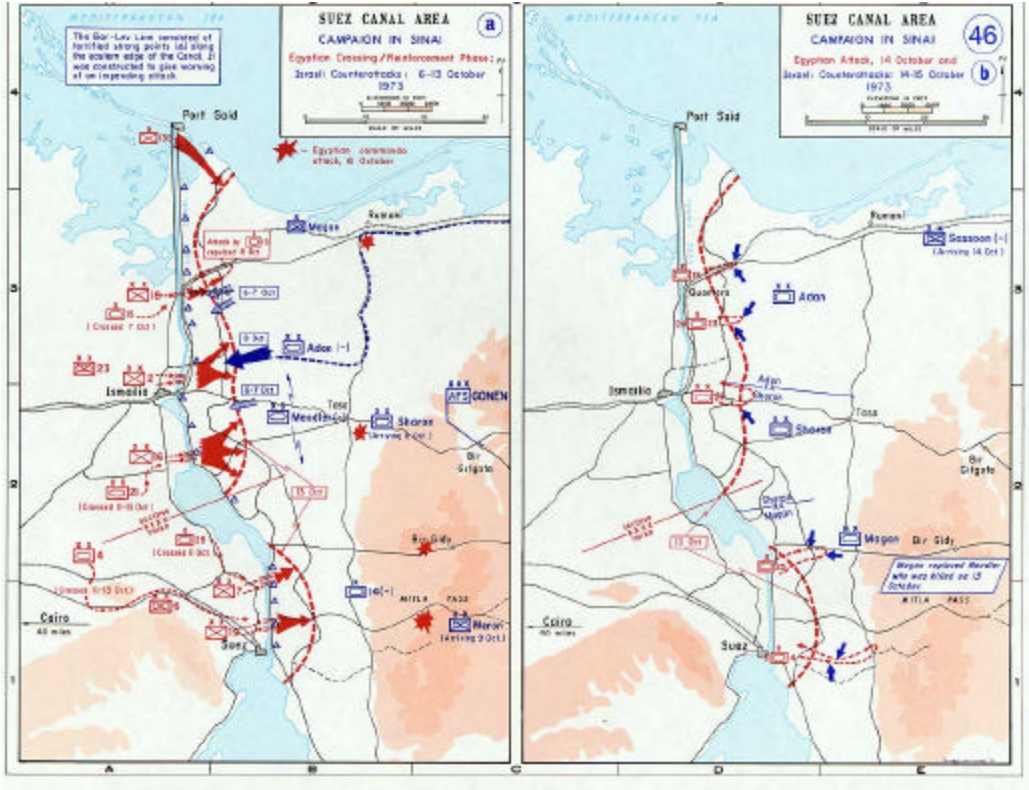


Figure 3: Opening stages of the Yom Kippur War. *Source:* Atlas for the Arab-Israeli Wars, the Chinese Civil War and the Korean War (Wayne, NJ: Avery Publishing Group, Inc., 1986). Online at [www.dean.usma.edu/history/dhistorymaps](http://www.dean.usma.edu/history/dhistorymaps).

This initial strategic and operational success by the Egyptians and Syrians had a profound and lasting effect on the Israeli mindset. The shock related by Golda Meir (see

quote above) was felt throughout Israel. In the aftermath of the war, the Israelis would have a newfound respect for Arab arms.

Because of the operational depth the Sinai afforded the IDF, the bulk of its airpower worked to stop the more serious threat in the north, where the Syrians were threatening to break into Israel proper. Israeli commanders in the Sinai, with insufficient infantry and artillery to support their tank heavy forces took a savage beating trying to wrest the initiative from the Egyptian Army. Headlong charges into the bridgeheads without sufficient artillery to suppress Egyptian defenses, played right into Sadat's strategy of inflicting maximum casualties.

Late on 11 October, with the Egyptians still snugly ensconced in their bridgeheads, an emissary from Syrian President Hafez Assad came to Cairo. He came to plead with Sadat to apply more pressure on the Sinai front. The Syrians were being handled roughly in the north and though they had very nearly broke into the Israeli heartland in the first days, the Israelis now had the initiative. Syria needed help to draw off part of the Israeli air force concentrating on them.

Sadat relented, and on 14 October, the Egyptians launched a five brigade attack into the Israeli defense. The result was a crushing defeat, the loss of 250 tanks and an enormous blow to Egyptian confidence. More importantly, the initiative passed to the IDF permanently. This set back was perhaps fortuitous for the peace process. The Egyptian successes up until 14 October may very well have made Sadat too difficult to deal with at the peace table. The next ten days would change that.

On 16 October, the IDF crossed the canal and onto the West Bank at the seam between the Egyptian 2nd and 3rd Armies. By 18 October, the IDF had the better part of

three armored divisions on the west bank and was in position to cut off Egyptian troops in Sinai, particularly the Egyptian 3rd Army.

On 21 October, Anwar Sadat informed his senior advisors that he would seek a cease fire. The Egyptian army was nearing collapse. The Egyptian 3rd Army was nearly encircled, and the Israeli Air Force had a free hand over the battlefield. That said, the IDF and Israeli society would never be the same. Shocked and bloodied by the ordeal, the senior leadership of Israel was a more humble, albeit victorious group. The sense of humility felt by both sides made the work of peacekeepers possible.

### Diplomacy

Early in his presidency, Sadat had opened a back channel communication link with the US government.<sup>3</sup> Lacking formal diplomatic ties through the US State Department, Sadat approached Henry Kissinger, the Nixon administrations National Security Advisor. Kissinger, who lacked ties with Secretary of State William Rogers himself, welcomed the communication.<sup>4</sup>

In the months preceding the war, Egyptian National Security Advisor Ahmad Ismail met twice with Kissinger. The first of these meetings was held in February 1973. Kissinger, though impressed with Ismail, noted that “he appeared more pliable than he really was.”<sup>5</sup> Ismail visited nearly all of the governments that mattered prior to the war, in an effort to gauge intentions and attitudes for Sadat.

The following April, Ismail met again with Kissinger, this time in Paris. The message from Kissinger to the Egyptians was direct, “Egypt should stop acting like a military victor:”<sup>6</sup> He added:

We live in a real world and cannot build anything on fancies and wishful thinking. Now in terms of reality you are the defeated side . . . you may be capable of changing existing realities . . . I am not calling on Sadat to change the military situation for if he tries to do that, Israel will again defeat you.<sup>7</sup>

Input like this further convinced Sadat that he had to take military action to change the strategic equation. He had no intention of trying to defeat Israel, but to shake them out of their negotiating position. In an interview with *Newsweek* before the war, Sadat made clear his intention to pursue diplomacy before, during and after any war.<sup>8</sup> A purely military strategy would lead to disaster; the purely diplomatic strategy currently employed was going nowhere; the key was a mixture.

In accordance with his concept, the first diplomatic activity began in coordination with the Egyptian Army crossing the canal. The US, caught by surprise every bit as much as the Israelis, received its first overture on 7 October. The Soviets, who received scant advance warning of the attack themselves, pressed the Egyptians from the outset to ask for a cease fire. In the first several days, Sadat refused.<sup>9</sup> With the Egyptian army holding the initiative and inflicting heavy casualties, Sadat felt that it was not time to settle as yet.

On 12 October, having pushed the Syrians back off the Golan Heights, the Israeli cabinet instructed Abba Eban to approach the Nixon administration about requesting a cease fire in place. Working on a parallel path, the British Ambassador in Cairo approached Sadat with a similar proposal.<sup>10</sup> Sadat refused once again to consider a ceasefire.

12 October was Sadat's best opportunity to stop the war at the Egyptian high tide. He missed this chance for the same reason that Israel had missed opportunities to settle the Sinai issue peacefully. In simple terms, the Egyptian leader perceived himself in a

position of strength and wanted to extract concessions from his adversary that the Israelis were not willing to concede.<sup>11</sup>

### Intervention

By 19 October 1973, the US president was urging Israel to make peace. The Soviets were discussing the same in Cairo, and Sadat was now listening. Henry Kissinger departed for Moscow on 20 October. The purpose of his trip was to draft a Security Council resolution in concert with the Soviets to stop the fighting. UN Security Council resolution 338 was ready in short order. It passed by a vote of 14-0 (China abstaining) on 22 October.

The order to cease fire on 22 October could not have come at a better time for the Egyptian Army. The IDF on the west bank of the canal was very near to completing the encirclement of the Egyptian 3rd Army. The timing of the UN resolution was not lost on anyone in the Israeli chain of command. The IDF was determined that the Security Council would not save 3rd Army. The Israelis completed the encirclement over the next two days (see figure 4).

The violations of the cease fire on 22 October were anticipated at the UN. The situation was confused, with troops inter-mixed and both sides violating the terms of the agreement. The Israeli leadership appears to have had a clear understanding of the situation on the west bank of the canal. Egyptian violations were numerous and provided ample pretext for the IDF to completely cut off 3rd Army.

The fact that the IDF deprived Sadat of his negotiating advantage and effectively took the Egyptian 3rd Army hostage was a key to the subsequent peace negotiations. The

plight of 3rd Army prompted Sadat's authorization of direct negotiations with the IDF over the provisions of the ceasefire, which led to direct talks over broader issues.

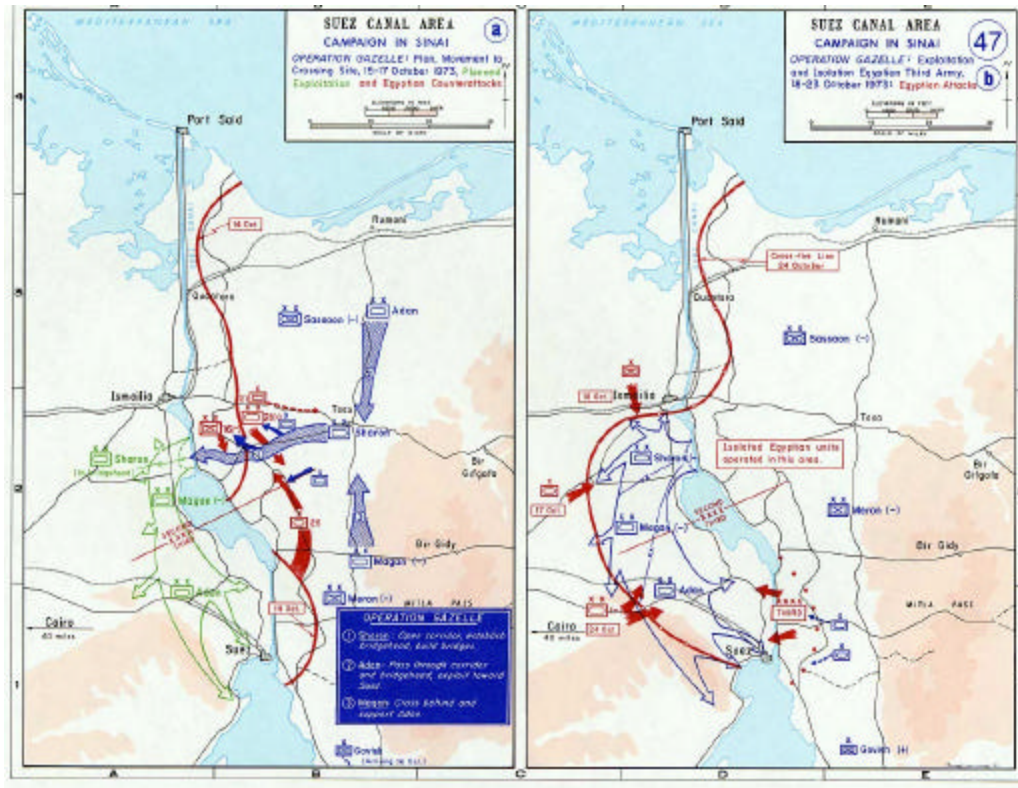


Figure 4: Israeli counter-attack and encirclement of Egyptian 3rd Army. *Source:* Atlas for the Arab-Israeli Wars, the Chinese Civil War and the Korean War (Wayne, NJ: Avery Publishing Group, Inc., 1986). Online at [www.dean.usma.edu/history/dhistorymaps](http://www.dean.usma.edu/history/dhistorymaps).

By 24 October, the tone of US communications with Israel became as strident as 3rd Army's situation was desperate. The Soviet Union had intimated that it was considering unilateral action to stop Israeli aggression. These were tense hours, as the Soviets readied airborne units for deployment and the US countered by sending three



aircraft carriers toward the scene.<sup>12</sup> The Security Council met into the early hours on 25 October and the result was a reiteration of SCR 338 with a request for the Secretary General to send in UN Observers.<sup>13</sup> As noted earlier, UNTSO had been ejected from the canal zone. They were in no position to meet the Security Council request.

After another day of diplomatic wrangling on all sides, the situation stabilized. The US insured that Israel understood that the destruction of 3rd Army was not an option.<sup>14</sup> Israel continued to insist on face to face negotiations and would not allow UN convoys through to 3rd Army. Sadat relented and agreed to face to face negotiations with the Israelis over the terms of implementation of the cease fire. The first meetings took place at kilometer 109 on the Cairo to Suez road at midnight on 27 October.<sup>15</sup>

#### UNEF2

On 25 October, the eight non-aligned members of the Security Council drafted what was to become Security Council Resolution (SCR) 340.<sup>16</sup> The draft expressed dismay at repeated violations of SCR 338 and demanded compliance with the earlier resolution. Most significant in the draft was the following passage:

The Security Council . . . 3. Decides to set up immediately, under its authority, a United Nations Emergency Force to be composed of personnel drawn from States Members of the United Nations except the permanent members of the Security Council, and requests the Secretary General to report within 24 hours on the steps taken to this effect.<sup>17</sup>

This force would come to be known as UNEF2.

Little noted in the backwash of history on 25-26 October 1973 were two critical elements of the ensuing peace process. First, the UN Security Council decided to establish a peacekeeping force. This was a change from the ill-fated UNEF1 mission, which was established by the General Assembly. The Security Council mandate meant

that the Superpowers would be involved in any future crisis. More importantly, it meant that the United States was engaged in the peace process, a key goal of Sadat's overall strategy.<sup>18</sup> Second and far more important was Sadat's decision to hold direct negotiations with the Israelis. Direct negotiations had been an Israeli demand for over two decades. Up to this point the Egyptians had steadfastly refused to negotiate with Israel in any setting.<sup>19</sup> The Israelis recognized the change immediately and the ceasefire negotiations reflected a new Israeli willingness to compromise.<sup>20</sup>

Upon approval of SCR 340, the Secretary General Kurt Waldheim (Austria) took rapid action. The high level of tension between the United States and the Soviet Union provided ample motivation for all involved. Waldheim summoned representatives from Austria, Finland, and Sweden were called to a meeting. By the afternoon of 25 October he had requested and received approval for troops from those countries to begin movement. The Security Council approved MG Ensio Siilasvuo (Finland), the Chief of Staff of UNTSO as the interim Commander.<sup>21</sup>

The mandate for UNEF2 was approved by the Security Council later on 25 October. Below is a synopsis of that mandate (authors' note in italics):

Tasks:

- a) Supervise the immediate observation of a complete ceasefire . . . and their return to positions of 22 October, 1850 hrs.
- b) Prevent the fighting from starting again and cooperate with the International Red Cross.
- c) Cooperate with UNTSO.

General Outlines

- a) The force is to be under UN Command exercised by the Secretary General and under the authority of the Security Council. A Force Commander is to be appointed by the Secretary General after the consent of the council . . . Anything that might interfere with the functioning of the force is to be referred to the Security Council.

- b) The Force must have the necessary freedom of movement and be granted all relevant UN privileges and immunities. The force should operate separately from the forces of the parties, i.e. in different quarters and, if suitable in buffer zones in cooperation with the parties . . . (parties refers to Egypt and Israel)
- c) The Force is to be composed of contingents chosen by the Secretary General . . . while observing the accepted principle of “adequate geographic representation” (*meaning that communist bloc countries would not be excluded*)
- d) The force will have defensive weapons only and may use force only for self defense, which includes resistance to efforts to use force preventing it from functioning according to mandate (*this expanded definition of self defense is an interesting departure, Bertil Stjernfeldt thought that it may have had to do with violence on Cyprus*)<sup>22</sup> . . . It is assumed that the conflicting parties will do everything possible to conform to the resolution of the Security Council”
- e) The force is to act with complete impartiality . . . not neglecting the demand for cease fire or return to earlier positions (The last part was added to Waldheims draft, the earlier positions were those occupied on 22 October at 1850)
- f) The Secretary General will provide supporting personnel for the force, using existing UN Staff

Suggested plan of action

The Chief of UNTSO, MG Siilasvuo, already appointed interim Force Commander, is to organize a provisional headquarters using his own personnel from the observer organization.

To make it possible for the force to solve its tasks it should consist of about 7,000 men and the first period of its mandate should be six months.<sup>23</sup>

The mandate is a remarkable document, in that it shows the high level of interest the Security Council had in details of UNEF2 operations. Instead of giving a mission type order, it delves into rules of engagement, relations with humanitarian assistance, and even suggests a detailed plan of action. This tact is quite different than that taken with UNEF1, which was given scant guidance.

While the Security Council was drafting a mandate, Swedish UN Peacekeeping Battalion 50C was celebrating the end of its peacekeeping tour on Cyprus. The battalion commander, LTC Lennart Onfelt was a bit uneasy. He spent much of the evening of 25 October following world events on BBC broadcasts. As it turned out, he was uneasy for

good reason.<sup>24</sup> At 0130 hours on 26 October he received a message from the Swedish Army Staff. Quite cryptic, it said only “prepare for action in Egypt, extent not clear.”<sup>25</sup> At 0700 hours the following morning, an RAF helicopter picked up Onfelt and transported him to a meeting in Nicosia, Cyprus. By 1445 hours, the battalion advance party was enroute for the RAF airfield at Akoitiri, Cyprus. By 2345 hours (Cairo time) on 26 October the advance guard was on the ground at Cairo. The main body followed, landing at 0700 hours the following morning.<sup>26</sup> By 1 November, the Swedish, Finnish, and Austrian battalions from UNFICYP (United Nations Forces in Cyprus) with a strength of 750 men and fifty-five vehicles, were on the ground in Egypt.<sup>27</sup> UNEF2 had arrived.

The UNEF2 Commander, MG Siilasvuo, was already in Cairo, there tending to UNTSO business at the time. Egyptian troops had handled UNTSO roughly, following the collapse of the Bar Lev line. On the east bank of the canal (Israeli side) advancing Egyptian troops killed two observers and beat several others.<sup>28</sup>

MG Siilasvuo met the battalions at the airport. By 1800 on the 27th, the Swedish battalion was in Ismailia. The Finnish Battalion was dispatched to Port Suez (where 3rd Army was encircled), and the Austrians held in reserve. Siilasvuo’s orders were very curt. He had little hard information on a very fluid situation. To the Finns, he said “go there and make peace.”<sup>29</sup> He was slightly more verbose with the Swedes, but could not add much in the way of operational detail. LTC Edgren (Chief of Staff, Swedish battalion) wrote down his instructions: “we do not know where the front is. Fighting is going on. Your task: Get there. Get in between. Separate them. See that they stop shooting. Solve the problem as you see best and use your imagination. Any questions?” Siilasvuo said

later that he was hoping “that the two experienced battalion commanders could find the correct solutions.”<sup>30</sup>

In Ismailia, the Swedish Battalion quickly established observation posts between the parties. Ceasefire violations were rampant, and the peacekeepers found themselves in the middle of firefights on a regular basis. Both Israeli and Egyptian commanders sought to improve their positions whenever the opportunity allowed.<sup>31</sup>

In the meeting tent at Kilometer 109 on the Suez-Cairo highway (later moved to Kilometer 101, the Israeli limit of advance), Israeli and Egyptian officers met in an almost cordial atmosphere. Both sides had an interest in settling their differences. The reservist based IDF, very sensitive to casualties, had been bloodied. The Egyptian 3rd Army was literally dying of thirst. The solution to both problems was to stop the fighting. This common interest was the basis of quick action at the highest levels of the Egyptian and Israeli governments.

Humanitarian supplies for 3rd Army began to flow immediately, with UNEF2 soldiers taking over Egyptian trucks at kilometer 101 and driving them through the Israeli checkpoints. IDF officers inspected the goods at the canal and handed them over to the Egyptians for the canal crossing.<sup>32</sup> UNTSO observers (successors to the twenty-six man force emplaced by LTG Odd Bull) were critical at every point in the operation. Six UNTSO officers made up the core UNEF2 staff. Other UNTSO personnel acted as guides, interpreters and local area experts for UNEF2.<sup>33</sup>

On 11 November, the parties signed a six point agreement. The first ever document signed jointly by the Israeli and Egyptian governments. In the agreement, the parties committed to:

1. Scrupulously observe the ceasefire.
2. Open discussion on withdrawal to the positions of 22 October, within the framework of a troop separation agreement.
3. The town of Suez would receive supplies daily, wounded civilians evacuated.
4. Third Army would receive supplies daily.
5. UNEF would take over Israeli checkpoints on the Cairo-Suez road.
6. All POW's would be exchanged once UN control of the checkpoints was established.<sup>34</sup>

As might be expected, the agreement was violated frequently by both sides, usually because communications did not reach the tactical level. In one instance, a Finnish Battalion had to take an Israeli checkpoint on the Cairo Suez road by force of arms, literally. The battalion put down its weapons, rolled up its sleeves and ejected the surprised Israelis with their fists. The “Finnish Birching” as it came to be known in UNEF circles established a “basis for mutual respect and good relations in the future.”<sup>35</sup>

Authors Note: Nearly 30 years after the “Finnish Birching” I was driving through the border town of Rafah, North Sinai with a Fijian Captain, the sector commander for the northernmost portion of the Fiji Battalion area. He was a big man (as are most of the Fijians), on his third tour with the MFO. On every street corner Egyptian children would run alongside the vehicle yelling “Fiji . . . Fiji!”. It was clear that the Fijian Battalion had an extraordinarily good relationship with the local population. I commented on my impression. He said “yes, the boys shop in the town . . . and they (referring to the Egyptians) know that we are not afraid to use this” showing me a rather impressive bicep with clenched fist. I concluded that peacekeeping at the troop level is not always done across a negotiating table, nor does it have to devolve into a firefight

On 14 November, UNEF2 completed a prisoner exchange, with 8,300 plus Egyptians and 241 Israelis exchanged.<sup>36</sup> Complicating the lives of the Finnish troops in the vicinity of Suez was a constant stream of refugees moving towards Cairo. The IDF occupied area was soon emptied of Egyptian civilians who apparently feared getting caught up in renewed attempts to relieve 3rd Army.

Throughout the UNEF2 area was the Egyptian militia, consisting largely of students released from the Cairo University. These soldiers, armed with rifles, helmets and little else (including training) tended to fire at anything that moved during hours of darkness. This often precipitated firefights with better equipped Israeli forces.<sup>37</sup>

#### Impasse and Breakthrough

After the agreement on supplies for the Suez area and 3rd Army, progress slowed in the negotiations at Kilometer 101. Violations of the ceasefire and how to prevent them were always on the agenda. Though nearly an hourly occurrence, the violations were seldom serious in nature, compared to the recent combat. UNEF2 was proving its worth.

A more contentious issue was point two of the six point agreement: withdrawal to positions held on 22 October. The Egyptians were extremely frustrated with the Israeli refusal to address this point. The Israelis focused on the second half of that point, referring to a troop separation agreement. Most observers at the time of the six point agreement were convinced that withdrawal to positions held on 22 October would never take place. From a practical standpoint, it was impossible to establish a line on the map to which both sides could agree and there were no UN observers in the area on 22 October to help establish positions for UNEF2 to occupy. From a negotiations standpoint, withdrawal would loosen the IDF grip on 3rd Army and compromise the Israeli position.

A common thread that runs through all of the peacekeeping operations in the Sinai is the effect that tactical and operational details have strategic and diplomatic implications. Israel could not give ground west of the Suez Canal without compromising her negotiating position. Sadat could not negotiate significant Israeli concessions while

the IDF held a knife at the throat of 3rd Army. Thus the peacekeepers position was crucial in keeping the forces separated, while negotiations inched forward.

On 29 November, the Egyptians broke off negotiations at Kilometer 101. The parties would not talk again until a summit meeting in Geneva on 21 December. This summit was attended by Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Israel, the US and the USSR. UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim presided. The atmosphere was strained and little was accomplished on the overall Middle East problem. Upon adjournment, the nations agreed to set up a military working group to examine the problem of separation of forces. The UNEF2 commander was appointed chairman of the working group.

The group met six times between 26 December and 9 January. The working group crafted a compromise agreement that went beyond just the military realm. The representatives from each government returned home with the draft for approval. After another round of shuttle diplomacy by the US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, the separation agreement was signed on 18 January 1974. The agreement was labeled Sinai 1. Colonel Yaakov Heichal, a member of the Israeli delegation, attributed this breakthrough to the leadership of the UNEF2 Commander: “without Siilasvuo there would have been no discussions in Geneva and no concrete results within a reasonable time.”<sup>38</sup>

The key points of Sinai 1 provided for the IDF to withdraw by stages (see figure 5), under UN supervision, to a line fifteen-twenty kilometers east of the canal. UNEF2 would occupy a five kilometer wide buffer zone between the forces. Egypt was allowed to keep its foothold in the Sinai, and Israel maintained significant security with UNEF2 and the bulk of the Sinai between the Egyptian Army and Israel proper. The Straits of



Tiran remained under Israeli control. The wording of the document allowed that this was but a first step towards a comprehensive peace between the parties.<sup>39</sup>

### Operation Calendar

Though fantastically complicated at the tactical level, the withdrawal of IDF forces from the west bank of the canal went smoothly. Beginning on 25 January, IDF forces withdrew by phases. After each withdrawal, UNEF2 forces took up positions in a new buffer zone, maintaining the separation of the forces (see figure 5). On 21 February, the last Israeli vehicle crossed the canal back into Sinai. By 5 March 1974, the Israelis were established along the line of low hills that runs north and south, fifteen-twenty kilometers east of the canal.

Close behind the withdrawing Israelis were the troops of UNEF2, engaged in all manner of battlefield police work and bent to the task of establishing the buffer zone on the canal's east bank, to separate the forces (see figure 6). Demarcation of the buffer zone, mine clearing, and development of infrastructure to support UNEF2 absorbed much of the peacekeepers effort in the early days. UNEF2 mounted a significant effort, labeled Operation Omega, to identify and repatriate the remains of both Israeli and Egyptian soldiers.

In December 1973, UNEF2 was comprised of six national contingents with a total strength of 1600 personnel. This included infantry battalions from Sweden, Finland, and Austria (noted earlier), an infantry battalion from Ireland, and logistics battalions from Poland and Canada. The Swedes, Finns, and Austrians were engaged separating the two forces on the west bank of the canal, while the Irish battalion operated in IDF controlled territory on the east bank. The Canadian and Polish battalions worked from the UNEF2

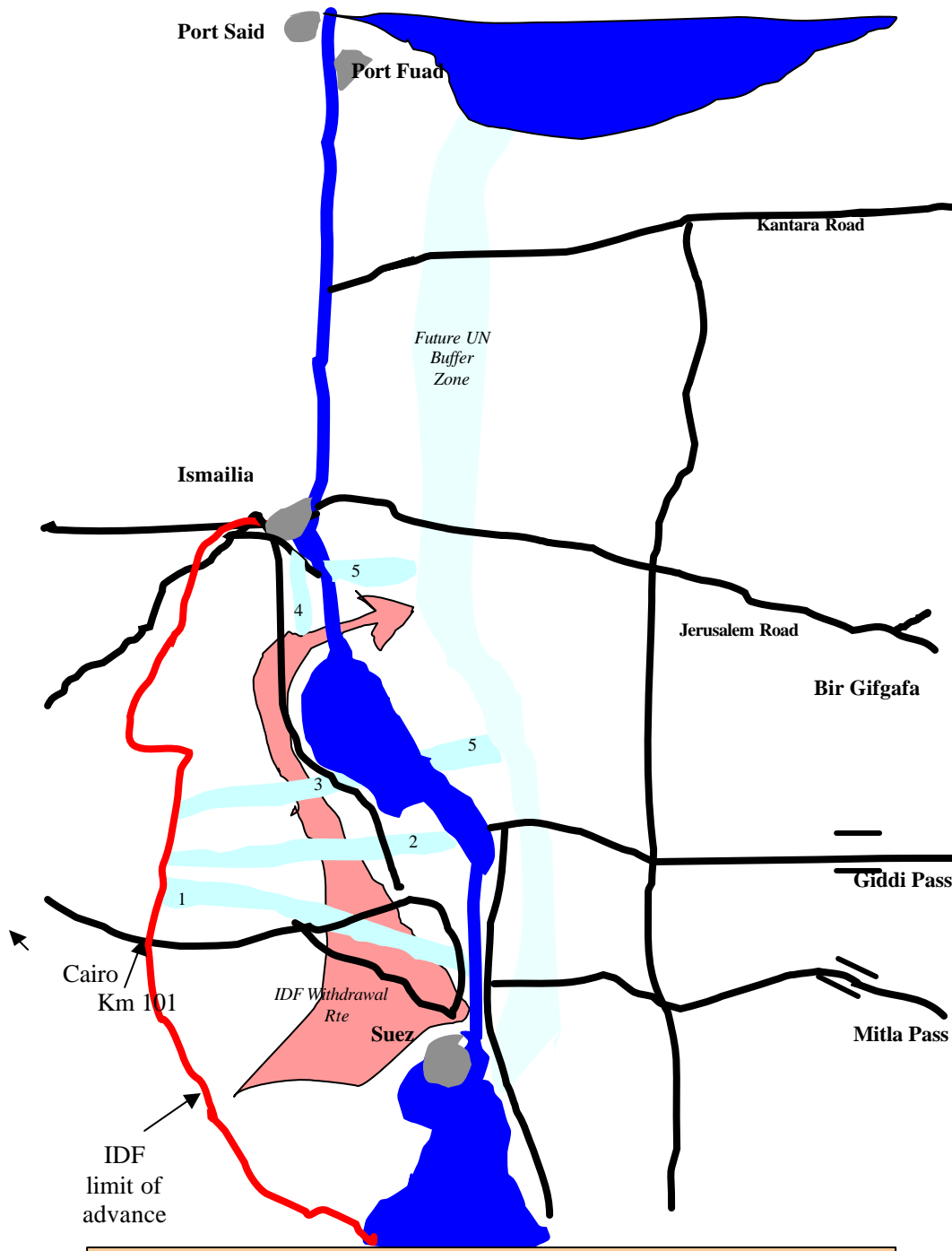


Figure 5: Operation Calendar, IDF withdrawal 18 January–5 March 1974. Source: Operational detail is based on a map found in: Bertil Stjernfelt, *The Sinai Peace Front* (London: Hurst and Company, 1987), 69.

logistics base at the Cairo airport. These battalions would eventually reach strengths of 1000 and 800 respectively, but were nowhere near that in December. The effort to man UNEF2 began to gain steam just as the troops on the ground were most needed. By mid-February the force had nearly reached its authorized strength of 7000.<sup>40</sup>

Early in the occupation of the buffer zone, it became apparent that the number of battalions manning sectors (nine) exceeded the comfortable span of control of the small UNEF2 staff. Siilasvuo solved the problem by organizing the force into two brigades (north and south). This task was made somewhat simpler by the arrival in theater of the Peruvian and Indonesian contingents, each with a Brigadier General commanding. The Northern Brigade, with its right flank anchored on the Mediterranean and its left just south of the Jerusalem road (see figure 6) established its headquarters at Rabah, on the Kantara road in Israeli controlled Sinai. It was composed of battalions from Ireland, Panama, Peru, and Sweden.

The Southern Brigade was headquartered in Suez City, on the west bank of the canal, in Egyptian controlled territory. Its right flank was tied in with the Northern Brigade south of the Jerusalem road. Its left flank reached the Gulf of Suez just north of Ras Sudar (see figure 6). The Brigade was composed of five battalions from Indonesia, Ghana, Austria, Senegal and Finland.

UNTSO continued to be a vital cog in the UNEF2 mission. While the buffer zone coalesced, UNTSO observers conducted inspections of Israeli and Egyptian limited armament zones under the UNEF2 aegis. UNTSO personnel were also heavily involved in Operation Omega, the location, identification, and repatriation of soldier's remains from both combatants.<sup>41</sup>

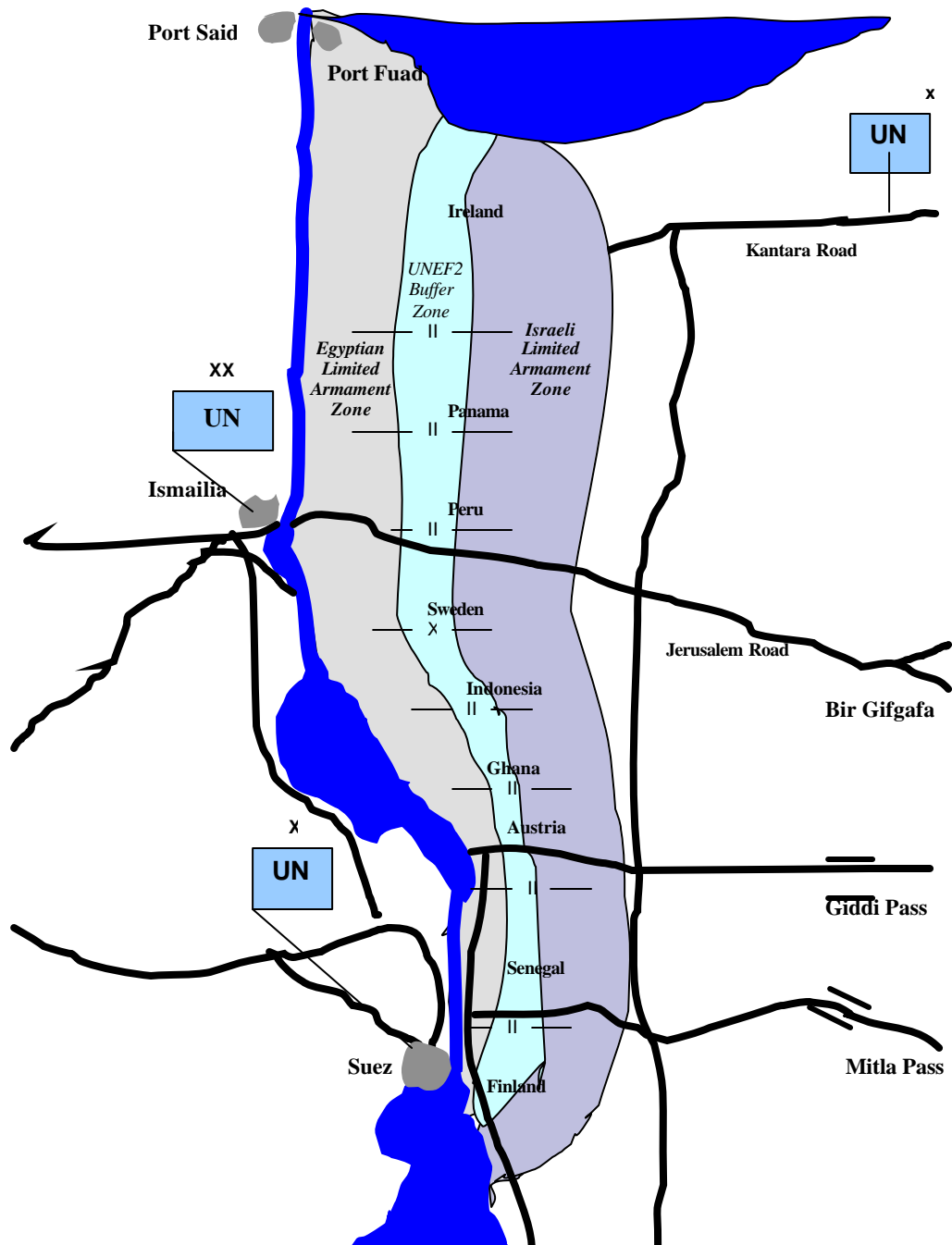


Figure 6: UNEF Buffer Zone as of 1 April 1974. *Source:* Operational detail is based on a map found in: U.N., S/ 11248, 20 May 1974, 15

The two brigade concept was short lived, due to reductions in UNEF2 forces. The Sinai cease fire agreement was holding, even if it was far from perfect and both sides violated provisions daily. However, in the Golan, the UN was struggling to separate the forces. The UN withdrew experienced units and staff from UNEF2 to build another force, for the Golan. The Irish Battalion was withdrawn to help with unrest at home in May 1974.<sup>42</sup> The Nepalese battalion withdrew in August, followed by the Panamanians in November. By January 1975 the UNEF2 force was down to 4,000 soldiers. The reduced troop levels did not cause a significant problem. Boundaries were adjusted, the Brigade headquarters stood down, and the mission continued. (see figure 7).

The situation at the tactical level was improving, but was quite different from what reached the press or the halls of government. Israeli fixed wing aircraft violated the zone on a daily basis. Egyptian reconnaissance patrols did likewise, and were stopped and escorted back to their lines. The IDF insisted on driving a tank mounted sky-lift (similar to bucket lifts used by utility companies) up into the UN zone, to observe Egyptian movement and disposition. UNEF2 soldiers repeatedly contested the sky-lift operation, until it ceased. The Sinai remained a dangerous place, with ten fatalities within UNEF2 from June 1974 to January 1975.<sup>43</sup>

Despite difficulty, the buffer zone held and was a strategic and operational success for all involved. UNEF2 proved once again the wisdom of Hammarskjöld's charge to maintain quiet. Negotiations at the highest levels of both governments moved forward in fits and starts against the relatively quiet background provided by the peacekeepers. UNEF2 was proving highly effective, but the overall success of the operation was yet to be decided.

## Sinai 2

In September 1975, Egypt and Israel signed a follow on agreement to Sinai 1. The agreement was a confirmation of the two nation's intent to continue the peace process, as noted in the first agreement signed in the tent at kilometer 101 and in Sinai 1. Sinai 2 was the result of near continuous shuttle diplomacy by the US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger. For UNEF2, it meant another round of redeployments, as Israel withdrew toward her borders (see figure 8).

The terms of the agreement provided for a withdrawal by the IDF all along the "C" line of the Sinai 1 agreement, but most notably in the area of the Giddi and Mitla passes. In addition, the IDF pulled back along the Gulf of Suez to relinquish control of the oil fields at Ras Sudr. The Egyptians remained in place, with the UNEF2 Buffer Zone expanding to take in the territory abandoned by the IDF.

Two strategic early warning sites were authorized under the terms of the agreement. One manned by the Israelis, the other manned by the Egyptians. Both of the sites were in the vicinity of the Giddi and Mitla passes. Sinai 2 created an observer group of 200 American civilians, soon to be known as the "Sinai Field Mission" (SFM) to monitor the activity at these sites. The agreement charged SFM with reporting to both of the parties, as well as UNEF2, any violation of the provisions of the Sinai 2 agreement. To facilitate their mission, the SFM was to man three of its own observation posts in the vicinity of the passes to "provide tactical early warning and verify access to" each of the strategic early warning sites.<sup>44</sup>

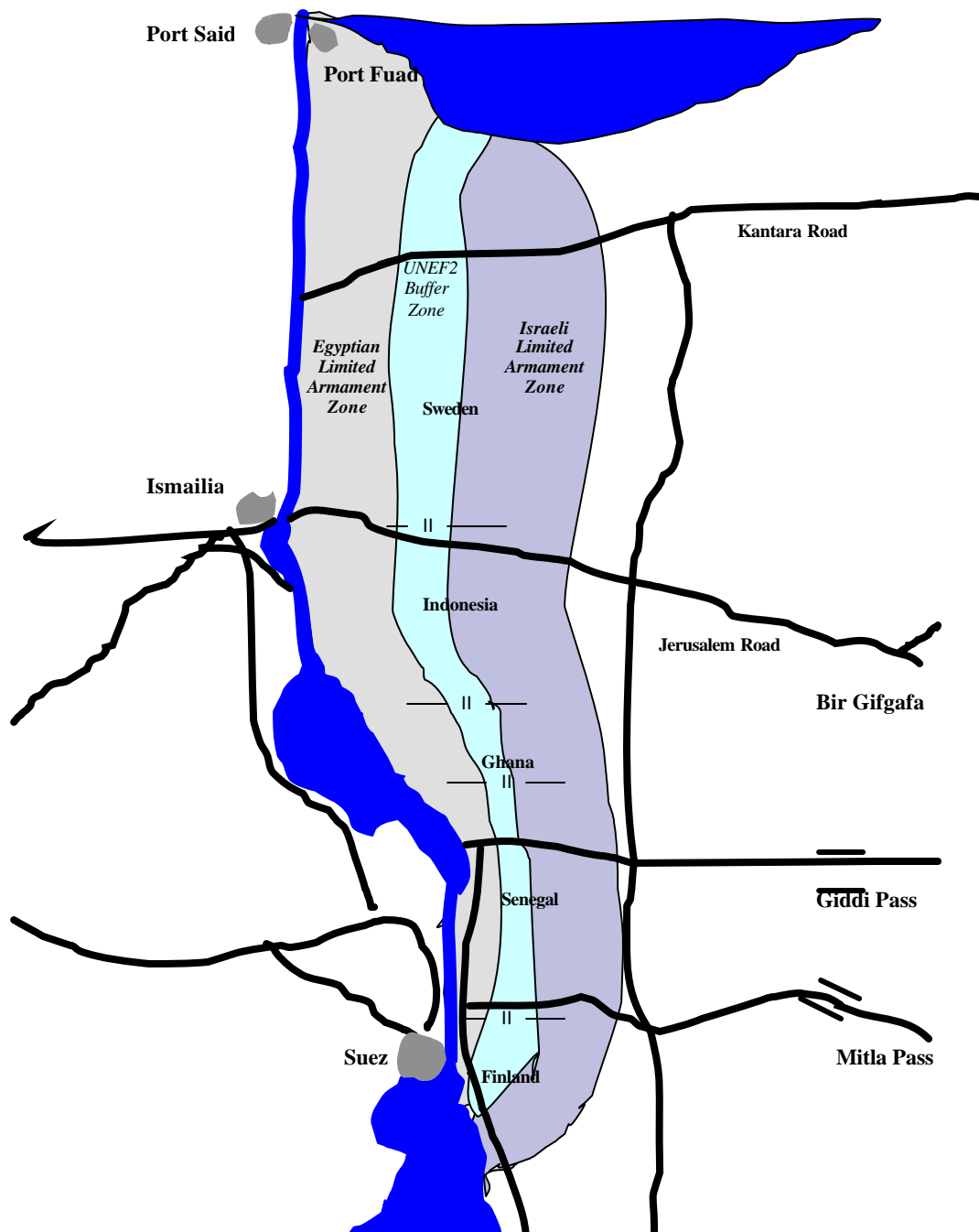


Figure 7: Deployment of UNEF2 in Buffer Zone as of January 1975. *Source:* Operational detail from U.N., S/ 11849 , 30 October, 1975

Sinai 2 tripled the area that UNEF covered with its buffer zone. Attempts to enlarge the force failed, as the world no longer sensed a crisis. An aviation unit from Austria was added, bringing four helicopters and three fixed wing aircraft. In the spring of 1976, Senegal withdrew its battalion, leaving the Swedish, Ghanaian, Indonesian, and Finnish battalions to extend their lines and make do (figure 8).

The sum of the Sinai 2 agreement was the withdrawal of IDF forces from the strategic passes, return of the Ras Sudr and Abu Rudeis areas to Egyptian civilian control, and the further commitment of Americans to the peace process in the Sinai, with the introduction of the Sinai Field Mission.

#### Mission Complete

After the redeployment caused by Sinai 2, there was a period of readjustment for all involved. UNEF2 soldiers became much more involved with the local Bedouin and in humanitarian work. All sides hailed the journey of Anwar Sadat to Jerusalem in October 1977, to speak to the Israeli Knesset. The Sinai was quiet and peace seemed near at hand.

In September 1978, Sadat, Menachem Begin (Israeli Prime Minister), and Jimmy Carter met at Camp David. Over thirteen days they hammered out two agreements that came to be known as the “Camp David Accords.” These accords provided a framework for a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt as well as a settlement for the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. A complete Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai was set to begin after an exchange of ratification documents. The process was almost derailed over the Palestinian question. However, the momentum of the agreement was too strong. With the help of the US President, the parties agreed to decouple the two issues and settle the peace between Egypt and Israel first.



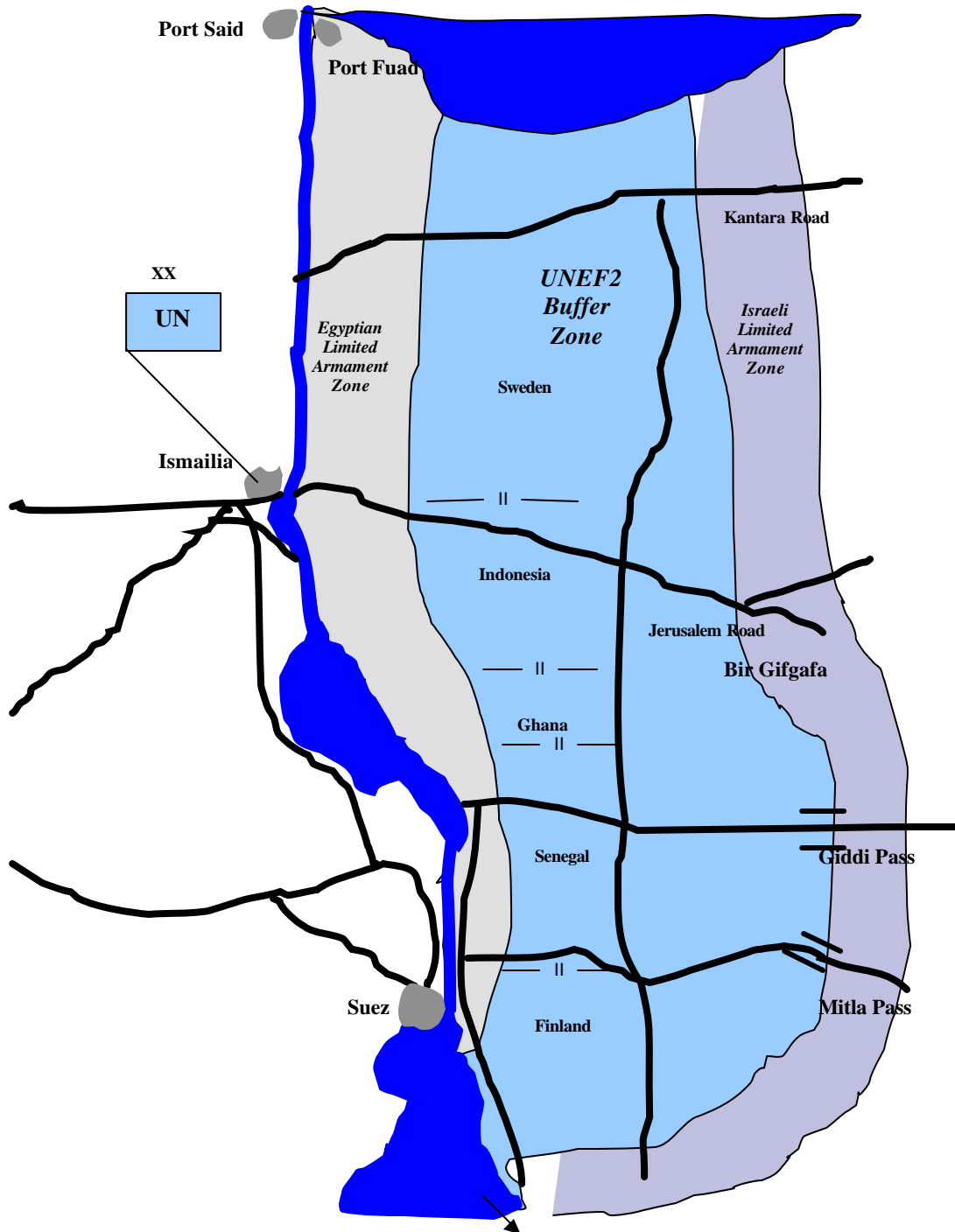


Figure 8: UNEF2 in Buffer Zone (Sinai II) October 1976. *Source:* Operational detail from U.N., S/ 12212, 30 October, 1976.

The other nations in the Middle East were outraged, and many withdrew their ambassadors. In the midst of the uproar among the Arab states, the mandate for UNEF2 came up for renewal in the Security Council. After Sinai 1, the renewal plan was for one year periods every October. The Secretary General recommended no change, in that the language of Camp David called for UN supervision of the Israeli staged withdrawal, over a period of three years. Support for UNEF2 faltered. A compromise nine month mandate was approved to avoid a Soviet veto, and the service of UNEF2 in the Sinai approached its close.

Over the ensuing nine months many initiatives including a completely new mandate were floated by the US and its allies. To no avail, Israel began its staged withdrawal, leaving the northern coastal sector up to and including El Arish (see figure 9) to the Egyptian Army on 25 May 1979. After last minute maneuvering failed, the UNEF2 mandate expired at midnight 24 July 1979. Secretary General Kurt Waldheim ordered an immediate and orderly withdrawal.

#### Analysis

To say that UNEF2 was an effective peacekeeping force does not nearly do it justice. The fact that it is a relatively obscure chapter of history is a tribute to that effectiveness. Peacekeepers do their best work in anonymity. UNEF1 is remembered for its tragic end, leading to the 1967 war. UNEF2 ended its mission quietly, with the Sinai at peace, and is barely noted in the history of the Arab-Israeli wars. Operation Calendar alone, the withdrawal of the IDF across the Suez Canal, should be remembered as a tremendous accomplishment.

The professional performance of the soldiers of UNEF2 acknowledged, they were not permitted to participate in the final success of the overall mission. In terms of determining success or failure, we have to conclude that UNEF2 did neither. This mission will be a success when a peacekeeping force can withdraw and leave the Peninsula in a normal, sustainable peace.

UNEF2 was a useful, perhaps critical, tool in building confidence and maintaining quiet, while negotiators hammered out the details of the various agreements. Israel, Egypt, and the US determined that this tool was so critical that they could not do without it in carrying the peace process forward, even after the UNEF2 mandate expired. This conviction led to the creation of the Multinational Force and Observers.

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<sup>1</sup>George W. Gawrych, *The Albatross of Decisive Victory* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 2000) 170-172.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>3</sup>The communications link between the Sadat government and the Nixon administration is first discussed in Chapter 3 on page 39.

<sup>4</sup>Kissinger and Rogers were in permanent disagreement on virtually all aspects of Foreign policy.

<sup>5</sup>Bailey, 298.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 298.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 298.

<sup>8</sup>Gawrych, 179.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>11</sup>UN S/RES/340, 22 October 1973.

<sup>12</sup>Baily, 331.

<sup>13</sup>UN observers reached the frontline trace late on the 25th. They had expected to be monitoring implementation of the lines agreed to on the 22nd. Israeli moves had changed that trace significantly.

<sup>14</sup>Bailey, 333.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 336.

<sup>16</sup>Refers to the non-aligned movement started by President Gamal Abdel Nasser. These nations were ostensibly a group of nations non-aligned with either of the superpowers. Egypt and Cuba were two of the most influential of the non-aligned nations. The non-aligned nations involved were Guinea, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Panama, Peru, Sudan, and Yugoslavia. U.N., S/ 11046, 24 October, 1973

<sup>17</sup>Bailey, 364.

<sup>18</sup>Chaim Herzog, *The War of Atonement* (Boston: Little Brown, 1975), 22.

<sup>19</sup>The initial ceasefire negotiations took place in a tent at kilometer 109 (later moved to kilometer 101) along the Suez to Cairo road.

<sup>20</sup>U.N., S/11056/add.3 11 Nov 1973.

<sup>21</sup>U.N., S/11056, 28 October, 1973.

<sup>22</sup>Stjernfelt, 18.

<sup>23</sup>U.N., S/11052 rev1, 27 October, 1973

<sup>24</sup>Stjernfelt, 25.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 26-27.

<sup>27</sup>An interesting side note was the cooperation shown by the Turks and Greeks on Cyprus, whose conduct was exemplary, allowing the UN to shift forces to meet the emergency.

<sup>28</sup>Stjernfelt, 28.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 32.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 32.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 39-40.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 35.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 16,37.

<sup>34</sup>U.N., S/ 11248, 20 May 1974.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 36.

<sup>36</sup>U.N., S/ 11248, 20 May 1974.

<sup>37</sup>Stjernfelt, 40.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid, 64.

<sup>39</sup>U.N., S/1198/Rev.1/ Add.1, 18 January 1974.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 64.

<sup>41</sup>U.N., S/11248, 20 May 1974, 15.

<sup>42</sup>U.N., S/ 11248 add.3, 20 May 1974.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>U.N., S/ 11818 add.1, 2 September, 1975.

## CHAPTER 5

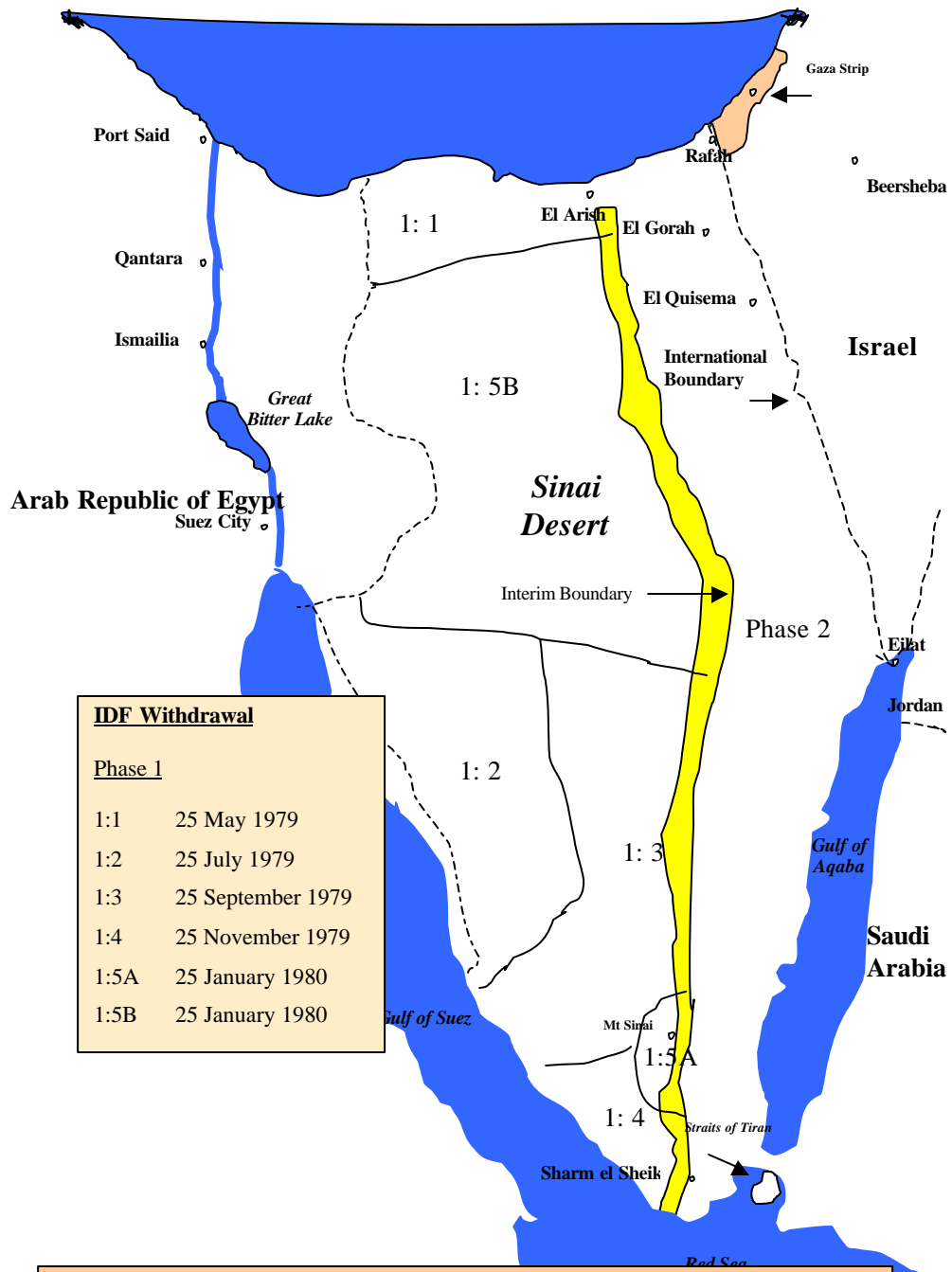
### THE MULTINATIONAL FORCE AND OBSERVERS

On 17 September 1978, Anwar Sadat, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, and US President Jimmy Carter signed a peace accord at Camp David, Maryland. This courageous and farsighted act by Sadat and Begin earned them the Nobel Peace Prize later that year. Sadly, it would cost Anwar Sadat his life.

Egypt was universally condemned by its Arab and African brethren. Provisions of the accord were extremely controversial in Israel as well. The UN Security Council, due to Soviet opposition, refused to provide peacekeepers to monitor the new agreement. Despite this opposition, Sadat and Begin persevered, and signed the Treaty of Peace between Egypt and Israel on 26 March 1979. The Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) was formed to monitor the final implementation of the Treaty in 1982. Peace followed in the Sinai, and peace persists to this day.

#### Camp David

The Camp David Accords provided a framework for peace between Egypt and Israel. The key provisions were: withdrawal of the IDF behind the 1947 international boundary (which left Gaza within Israel); autonomy for the Arab inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza; and normalization of relations between Israel and Egypt, to include full diplomatic, economic, and cultural exchange. In the Sinai, the IDF was to withdraw by phases to an interim line, El Arish to Sharm El Sheik (see figure 9) within three months of the signing of the Treaty documents.<sup>1</sup>



<b>IDF Withdrawal</b>	
<b>Phase 1</b>	
1:1	25 May 1979
1:2	25 July 1979
1:3	25 September 1979
1:4	25 November 1979
1:5A	25 January 1980
1:5B	25 January 1980

Figure 9: Map of Sinai with Sinai 2 withdrawal template. *Source:* This base map is a manual reproduction based roughly on a map found in: *The Multinational Force and Observers Servants of Peace Peacekeeping in Progress*: Published by The Office of Personnel and Publications, Multinational Force and Observers, Rome, 1999, 11. Operational detail is based on text found in: Sydney Bailey, *Four Arab Israeli Wars and*

The Israelis agreed to complete the interim withdrawal within nine months, and complete withdrawal from the Sinai within three years.<sup>2</sup>

The Camp David agreement called for UN supervision of all aspects of the withdrawal. Provision for UN occupation of zones, width of buffer zones between forces, and other details similar to Sinai 1 and Sinai 2 were included in the treaty itself. Facing a Soviet veto, the Security Council could not muster the votes to authorize UNEF2 participation in the operation.<sup>3</sup>

The Treaty was very nearly derailed in the fall of 1978 over the disposition of the West Bank and Gaza. The Camp David agreement required autonomy for the Palestinians, to be established over five years. In short, the Israelis did not include sovereignty in their definition of autonomy. When Begin announced expansion of West Bank settlements in October, the peace process stalled. Sadat protested by refusing to attend the Nobel Prize awards ceremony in December 1978.<sup>4</sup> The impasse continued amidst almost continuous negotiation until March 1979, when Egypt and Israel agreed to de-link the peace treaty and the Palestinian issue.

#### Interim Solutions

The signing of the treaty on 26 March 1979 invalidated the UNEF2 mission, since the two nations were no longer at war. However, under the withdrawal timetable, the IDF would remain in UNEF2 administered areas through the end of its mandate. The result was confusion, but these were not insurmountable problems. The soldiers of UNEF2 made room for advancing Egyptian units as the IDF withdrew, and it continued to do what it could to facilitate peace until the mandate expired on 24 July 1979.



The lack of peacekeeping forces, for the areas to be vacated by the IDF was a serious problem for the security conscious Israelis. The Security Council offered to assign UNTSO the task of supervising the withdrawal. The Israelis rejected this offer as insufficient.<sup>5</sup> Instead the Israelis turned to the US, which was obligated under the treaty to form an alternative peacekeeping force, if the UN would not provide one. The US responded that it would only do so if there was no alternative when the final withdrawal drew closer.<sup>6</sup>

With the first Israeli withdrawal set for 25 May 1979 (the Israelis moved the timetable up one month as a goodwill gesture), the Egyptians and Israelis decided on a direct handover, without UN involvement. This was a remarkable solution, given recent history, and indicative of how durable the treaty would be. Key to implementation was the manning of a buffer zone west of the interim withdrawal line (see figure 9), once the IDF had pulled back.<sup>7</sup>

A joint Egyptian and Israeli planning group set up an operation to monitor the withdrawal, buffer zone operations, and compliance with the provisions of the treaty. Personnel at the operational and tactical level worked out the details of this operation, and never committed them to writing.<sup>8</sup> Israelis manned the western edge of the buffer zone. Egyptians manned the eastern edge. Joint teams manned check points at key intersections in the buffer zone. On 25 May, Israel turned over the El Arish area to Egyptian authorities without incident. The Egyptians, for their part, scrupulously observed the force limitations embodied in the treaty.<sup>9</sup>

In September 1979, the US, Egypt, and Israel held meetings in Washington to formalize supervisory responsibility in the absence of a peacekeeping force. The resulting

agreement provided for joint Egyptian/Israeli supervision of the buffer zone, supervision by observers from the Sinai Field Mission of the remaining areas vacated, and aerial surveillance by the US.<sup>10</sup>

This agreement served the purpose of securing the interim withdrawal line. The final withdrawal was scheduled for April 1982. It called for the Israelis to withdraw the final twenty to fifty kilometers to the international border (IB). The interim withdrawal line and buffer zone established in 1982 provided the Israelis with a reasonable measure of security, if not the full strategic depth of the Sinai. Israel made it clear that a peacekeeping force, as addressed in the treaty, was a prerequisite for its final withdrawal to the IB. The solution was the MFO. The actions of the Egyptians and Israelis in the year after the signing of the Camp David Accords showed a real commitment to peace. If UNEF1 had the worst possible environment to start its mission, the MFO would have the best.

#### The Multinational Force and Observers

The US began planning for the MFO in February 1981. Final Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai was fourteen months away, and the force had to be in place by then. In April 1981, Egypt sponsored a final attempt to secure a UN backed peacekeeping force in the Security Council. The request was rejected.<sup>11</sup>

The basic diplomatic, financial, and force design work for the MFO was complete by late summer 1981. On 3 August 1981, the Protocol to the Treaty of Peace between Egypt and Israel was signed. The Protocol was the basic authorization document for the MFO, combined with the Treaty of Peace, it provides the basic blueprint for MFO operations.

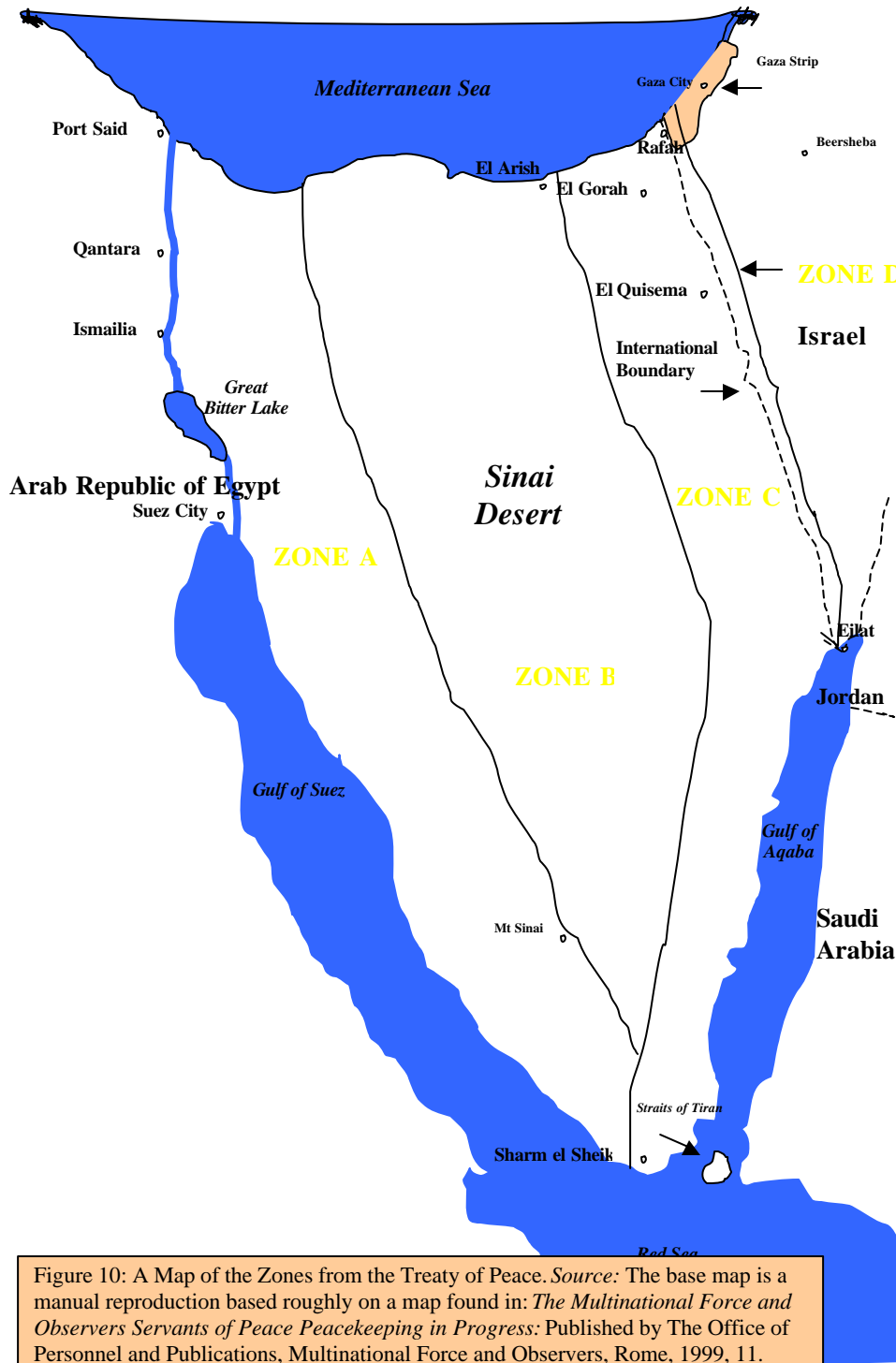


Figure 10: A Map of the Zones from the Treaty of Peace. *Source:* The base map is a manual reproduction based roughly on a map found in: *The Multinational Force and Observers Servants of Peace Peacekeeping in Progress*: Published by The Office of Personnel and Publications, Multinational Force and Observers, Rome, 1999, 11. Operational detail based on the authors experience as MFO Senior Operations Officer

The MFO was organized with a diplomatic and administrative arm headquartered in Rome, Italy, and lead by a Director General. The military force anticipated a headquarters in El Gorah, Egypt (see figure 10), at the time an Israeli air base, slated to be turned over to Egypt during the final withdrawal. The first Director General of the MFO was Leamon Hunt, a US diplomat. The first force commander was a Norwegian, LTG Frederic Bull-Hansen.

Clearly, this organization was a departure from that of UNEF1 and UNEF2. A local diplomatic headquarters replaced the Secretary Generals role in the case of UNEF1, and the Security Councils role in UNEF2, and thus provided a focused and responsive diplomatic element tailored to the role of the MFO.

#### Composition

Both parties desired US involvement in the peacekeeping force.<sup>12</sup> Israel preferred a predominantly US force. Egypt was a bit wary of a US dominated organization, but did not contest the issue. Israel based its thinking on the need for the force to be militarily effective. Additionally, and more important, US soldiers on the ground provided a “physical manifestation” of US political commitment to the existence and effectiveness of the force.<sup>13</sup>

The size of the force was dictated by the Protocol, limiting the MFO to “three infantry battalions totaling not more than 2000 troops, a coastal patrol unit and an Observer unit, an aviation element and logistics and signal units.”<sup>14</sup>

Although participation of the US was a forgone conclusion from the outset, the first nations to formally commit troops to the MFO were Uruguay, Columbia and Fiji, the latter two offering infantry battalions in the summer of 1981. The US committed an

infantry battalion and logistics unit in August 1981 along with a civilian observer unit (COU). Congress gave final approval to participation that December.

After the early commitments, which included the three requisite infantry battalions, recruitment slowed down.<sup>15</sup> Neither Egypt nor Israel wanted Soviet Bloc involvement; Israel would not accept nations with which it did not have diplomatic ties. Egypt ruled out African states, to avoid complications in the OAU (Organization for African Unity). Israel threatened to preclude European nations on the basis of their various criticisms and less than enthusiastic support of the Camp David formula for peace.

The US convinced Israel to abandon their position on Europe.<sup>16</sup> However, the Europeans were not knocking down the door to get in. As a community, they only partially approved of the Peace Treaty, believing that it did not go far enough in addressing the Palestinian issue. The assassination of Anwar Sadat on 6 October 1981 further complicated the recruiting effort, underscoring the still volatile nature of the mission.

Steady US diplomatic effort brought nations into the fold. Italy became the first of the European nations to commit, by agreeing to man patrol vessels monitoring the Straits of Tiran. France supplied a light aircraft detachment, with one transport and one reconnaissance aircraft. The Netherlands added military police and the British supplied a headquarters unit. European support convinced a somewhat hesitant Australia and New Zealand to provide a combined rotary wing unit.<sup>17</sup>

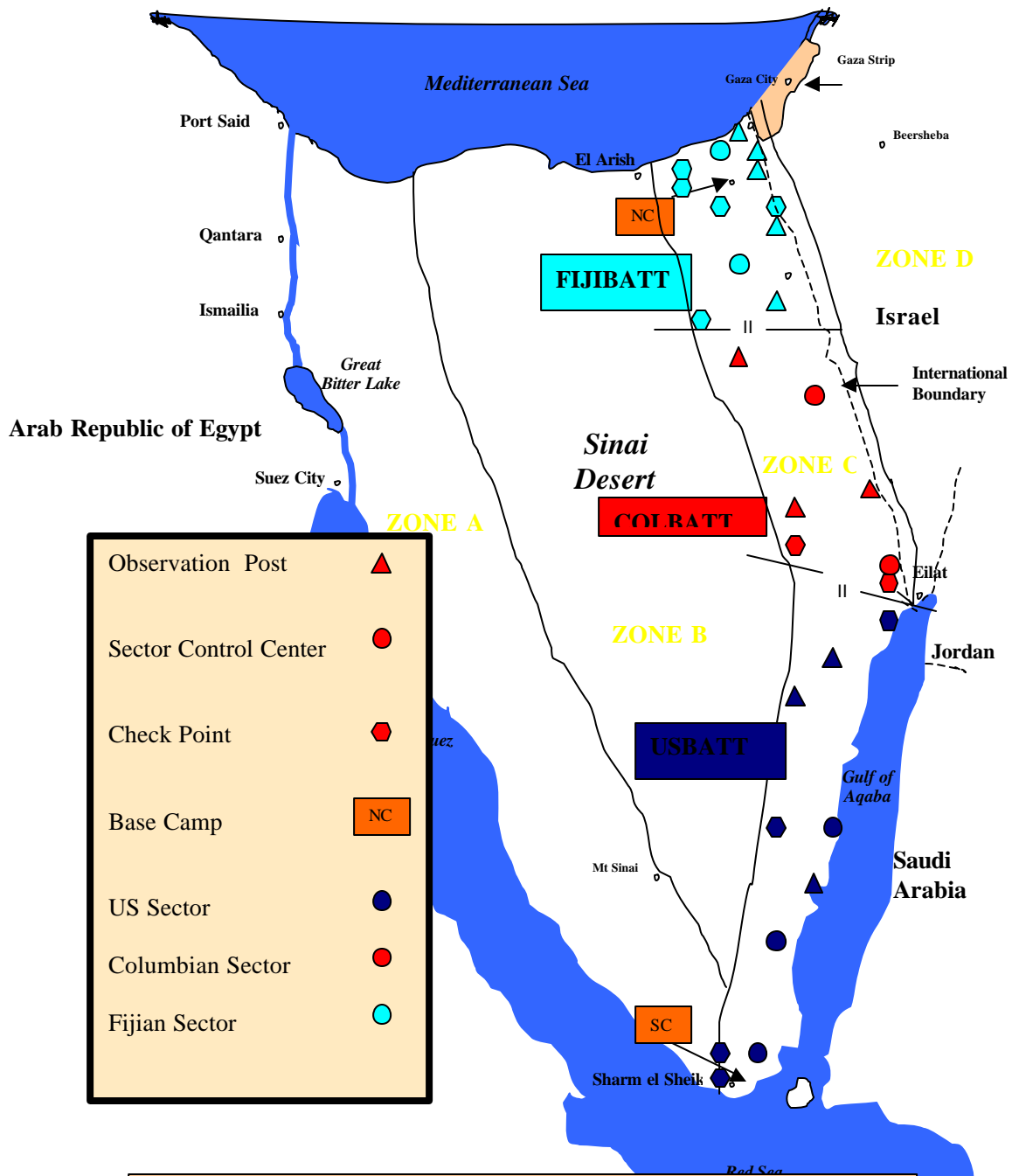
Much of the European Community (EC), reluctance was due to its objections to the Camp David framework for peace. Competing European proposals such as the 1980

Venice Declaration placed more emphasis on the problem of Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. European support of the MFO constituted de facto acceptance of the Camp David framework by the EC, a result more important than the participation of the forces themselves.<sup>18</sup>

Pulling together the various and disparate elements of the force, ironing out financial arrangements (not the least of which were the byzantine customs procedures present in both Israel and Egypt), and establishing infrastructure necessary to support a 2000 (plus) man force prior to April 1982 constituted a significant hurdle for the MFO. Due largely to a herculean effort on the part of the United States, the MFO began deploying into its base camp at El Gorah on 10 March 1982. On 25 April 1982, the IDF withdrew behind the IB, and the MFO assumed its mission.

#### Treaty Geography

The Treaty of Peace breaks the Sinai into four zones (see figure 10): three within Egypt (A-C) and one within Israel (D). The Protocol stipulates limits on military forces and equipment within each zone. The zone within Israeli territory was largely symbolic, since no peacekeepers would be stationed there. That said, peacekeeping is as much about symbolism as anything else and Zone D is an important symbol. Following the debacle of UNEF1 withdrawal in 1967, UN Secretary General U Thant criticized Israel for refusing to allow UNEF1 troops on the Israeli side of the IB. U Thant contended that the refusal placed UNEF1 at the mercy of the host nation, Egypt, leaving them little recourse when Nasser demanded withdrawal of the peacekeepers.<sup>19</sup> Zone D is patrolled on a regular basis by members of the MFO Civilian Observer Unit. It does not completely



Observation Post	▲
Sector Control Center	●
Check Point	⬡
Base Camp	NC
US Sector	●
Columbian Sector	●
Fijian Sector	●

Figure 11: MFO disposition of forces. *Source:* The base map is a manual reproduction based roughly on a map found in: *The Multinational Force and Observers Servants of Peace Peacekeeping in Progress*: Published by The Office of Personnel and Publications, Multinational Force and Observers, Rome, 1999, 11. Operational detail based on the authors experience as MFO Senior Operations Officer from June, 2001-June 2002.

address the shortcomings that U Thant referred to in 1967. However, it is an important symbol of Israeli participation in the Treaty. Zone D also provides a good example of a way in which the MFO has addressed the shortcomings of previous peacekeeping operations in the Sinai.

In Zone A, the Egyptian army is authorized one mechanized infantry division of up to 22,000 personnel, 230 tanks, 480 armored personnel carriers, 127 artillery pieces and early warning systems. In Zone B, Egypt is authorized up to four border battalion with wheeled vehicles and armed with light weapons. Zone C is occupied by the MFO. Egyptian authorities are limited to civil police, local government and liaison officers. In Zone D, Israel is limited to four infantry battalions with up to 180 armored personnel carriers and early warning systems. Operations by Egyptian and Israeli combat aircraft are authorized in Zones A and D respectively.<sup>20</sup>

#### Disposition

Although the Treaty deals with the Sinai comprehensively, Zone C is the focus of MFO attention (see figure 11). The MFO monitors all traffic in, out, and within Zone C, utilizing a system of thirty-two remote sites, mobile patrols, and aerial reconnaissance. Observers carefully scrutinize naval traffic in the Mediterranean and Gulf of Aqaba for compliance with the provisions of the treaty.<sup>21</sup> The COU executes periodic aerial and ground verification missions in Zones A, B, and D. The COU operates out of the MFO base camps at El Gorah and Sharm el Sheik, utilizing US rotary wing, and French fixed wing assets assigned to the MFO. MFO vehicles transiting Zones A, B, and D on logistics or administrative missions also provide input to the MFO headquarters at El Gorah on



activity in those zones. The Straits of Tiran are patrolled by Italian coastal patrol vessels assigned to the MFO.

By design, white MFO vehicles, aircraft, and naval vessels are highly visible throughout the Sinai. From the beginning, the MFO has been a tangible demonstration of the international community's approval for, and commitment to, the peace process as envisioned in the Camp David framework. The most important mission of MFO personnel is to be seen. COU personnel wear bright orange suits, visible for miles, for just this purpose. This simple act reinforces the faith that the parties have in the peace process, despite significant philosophical and political differences.

#### Mission Execution

The MFO mission is to "observe and report." The mission is further defined by four tasks specifically assigned to the MFO in the Protocol of 3 August 1981:

- 1) Operation of checkpoints, reconnaissance patrols, and observation posts along the international boundary and line B, and within Zone C.
- 2) Periodic verification of the implementation of the provisions of the Annex to the Treaty of Peace, to be carried out not less than twice a month unless otherwise agreed by the parties.
- 3) Additional verifications within 48 hours after the receipt of a request from either party.
- 4) Ensure freedom of navigation through the Strait of Tiran.<sup>22</sup>

Task one refers to "buffer zone" operations in Zone C. Task two refers to verification missions executed by the COU in Zones A, B, and D. These verifications include inspections of Egyptian and Israeli installations and supply points. Task three provides a mechanism by which the parties can request additional verification, if they suspect a violation. Task four refers to MFO Coastal Patrol Unit (CPU) operations in the Red Sea and Straits of Tiran.

MFO mission execution has been outstanding from the start. If measuring effectiveness by Hammarskjöld's standard; "maintain quiet . . . as a background for efforts toward resolving . . . pending problems." The MFO has been highly effective. Indeed, the Sinai has been absolutely silent. There has hardly been a single shot fired in anger in more than two decades. The single act of violence that mars the MFO record, albeit indirectly, took place in Rome when Director General Hunt was gunned down by Red Brigades terrorists on 15 February 1984, outside his apartment.

Silence though, does not tell the entire story. Violations of the treaty, some minor others more serious, have been numerous. The success of the MFO has hinged on its unmatched ability to maintain the faith of both nations while resolving violations of the treaty. This success is based first and foremost on lessons learned from UNEF1 and UNEF2. Violations seldom if ever reach the press, where they could inflame passions.

The military arm of the MFO documents violations of the treaty and passes them to Rome. The diplomats at the Rome, MFO headquarters inform the parties and the problem is resolved in relative silence, far removed from the spotlight of the international press or the UN. This allows the parties the further freedom to work together. For example, since the beginning of the Al Aqsa intifada in October 2000, the IDF has repeatedly violated the prohibition on tanks in Zone D. They do so with the tacit approval of the Egyptians, who understand their motivation. Israeli liaison officers explained to their Egyptian counterparts that tanks protect their soldiers and allow them to ignore small arms fire in the congested Gaza strip, keeping Palestinian casualties to a minimum.<sup>23</sup>

If every Israeli violation had been splashed across the Cairo papers, the Egyptian government would have had no choice but to demand Israeli compliance with the Treaty. This action would lead to either more Palestinian casualties or an Israeli refusal and crisis with the treaty. Instead, there is a pro forma documentation of the violation, and the treaty endures.

### Analysis

The fact that the MFO has been a highly effective peacekeeping operation is beyond question. The proof is in the fact that they have maintained Hammarskjöld's dictum of "quiet" for more than two decades, while the peace process has moved along in fits and starts. They serve at the pleasure of Egypt and Israel, both of whom are well pleased with MFO performance and are adamant that they remain in place.<sup>24</sup> Peace reigns in the Sinai and the MFO is a big reason why.

The development of a diplomatic arm for the MFO and placement of it in a third country is first among MFO innovations. The resolution of Treaty problems outside the international spotlight is a big part of the effectiveness of the MFO over time. Placement of a limited armament zone on the Israeli side of the IB, a broad based international force approved by both parties; limited force size, as a nod to fiscal reality, all play a part in the success of this peacekeeping force.

However, in the final analysis, the belief of Israel and Egypt in the peace process started at Camp David insures the success of the MFO. The participation of the United States, manifested by its soldiers on the ground, maintains the faith of the parties that the Camp David Framework will eventually succeed. Absent US participation, no other

nation or body of nations possess the military might and financial wherewithal, nor wields the influence to sustain the effort.

Before giving too much credit to the three Treaty partners, it should be noted that had the UN approved an extension of the UNEF2 mandate in 1979, the MFO may have developed differently, or not at all. The original framework did not include the organizational structure that has made this peacekeeping effort a success. That said, the MFO is a case study in how to organize and run a peacekeeping operation. In my view, it is highly fortuitous for all involved that the UN did not sustain its effort in the Sinai.

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<sup>1</sup>Treaty of Peace between the Republic of Egypt and the State of Israel, 26 March 1979 Annex I.

<sup>2</sup>The Camp David Accords, appendix 1.

<sup>3</sup>see chapter 4, pg. 65.

<sup>4</sup>Lester Sobel, *Peacemaking in the Middle East* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1980) 236.

<sup>5</sup>Mala Tabory, *The Multinational Force and Observers in the Sinai* (London: Westview Press, 1986), 5.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>7</sup>The buffer zone is described in detail in Article V Appendix 2 of the Treaty of Peace between the Republic of Egypt and the State of Israel, 26 March 1979 Dayan, 345.

<sup>8</sup>Mala Tabory states that the reason the details were worked out on the ground was that the negotiators could not reach consensus. The soldiers did the practical things necessary to make it work and ended up implementing most of the ideas that were objectionable to both sides. They did not inform their masters, who did not inquire. Tabory, 5.

<sup>9</sup>Stjernfelt, 137; Tabory, 4.

<sup>10</sup>The Sinai Field Mission was authorized up to 200 members, its strength was not more than 30-40 at this time. Tabory, 6.

<sup>11</sup>Tabory, 11-12.

<sup>12</sup>“parties” refers to Egypt and Israel as parties to the 1979 Treaty of Peace between Egypt and Israel.

<sup>13</sup>Tabory, 19.

<sup>14</sup>Protocol to the Treaty of Peace between Egypt and Israel, 3 August 1981, annex par. 19.

<sup>15</sup>During negotiations over the MFO Protocol, the size of the force was a significant debate. Military effectiveness, ability to man, and sustainability over time were key considerations. In the end, the only force level codified was “3 Infantry Battalions of not more than 2000 personnel”. MFO Protocol Annex, 19.

<sup>16</sup>Tabory, 21.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 26-36.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>19</sup>See Chapter 2, 27.

<sup>20</sup>Treaty of Peace between the Republic of Egypt and the State of Israel, 26 March 1979 Annex I, art. II a-d.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., Annex I, art. IV.

<sup>22</sup>Protocol to the Treaty of Peace between Egypt and Israel, 3 August 1981, annex par. 10.

<sup>23</sup>An Israeli Liaison officer explained it to me thusly; “our personnel carriers leak bullets, if I am in one and they shoot at me, I must shoot back. Our tanks do not have this defect.” I witnessed Israeli M-60A3 and Merkava tanks on many occasions being pelted with firebombs and small arms without returning fire.

<sup>24</sup>Dave Eberhardt “US Troops Needed Say Experts” *Newsmax*, 2 April 2002 (journal online) (accessed 29 April 2003); available at <http://www.newsmax.com/archives/articles/2002/4/2/53728.shtml>; Internet

## CHAPTER 6

### LESSONS LEARNED AND CONCLUSIONS

The Sinai has been quiet for over twenty years. The Multinational Force and Observers has stood watch during that time and done yeoman work. The international community has noted little to indicate that a peacekeeping force is still necessary.

Despite the apparent absence of hostility, the peace between Egypt and Israel is fragile.

The disposition of the West Bank of the Jordan River and the Gaza Strip remains a matter of contention between Egypt and Israel. This issue is a variation of the root problem that has driven the Arab–Israeli conflict since 1947. That being the equitable (as perceived by all involved) distribution of the former British mandate of Palestine between the Jewish state of Israel, and the Arab population of Palestine, now referred to as the Palestinians. The Middle East peace process is about the resolution of this problem, the root cause of the conflict.

The Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel is based on the Camp David framework for peace in the Middle East. Part of the Camp David framework is a “resolution of the Palestinian problem in all of its aspects.”<sup>1</sup> As noted in chapter 4, the two nations decided to de-link this portion of the framework and sign a Treaty of Peace in March of 1979. This delinkage did not mean that Egypt abandoned the Palestinian cause. The Egyptian people are passionate in their support of the Palestinians. The permanence of the peace between Egypt and Israel depends upon the satisfactory resolution of the “Palestinian problem.”

To understand the significance, and fundamental role peacekeepers play in the Sinai, avoid focusing on the peace between Egypt and Israel. The Sinai Desert should be visualized as a bridgehead of peace in a wider conflict encompassing the entire Middle East. A bridgehead currently held by the MFO, heirs to a legacy of dogged determination to resolve a conflict that many continue to see as irresolvable. The peacekeepers have not dwelt on the wider problem, impossible as it might be. Instead, they have done and continue to do the practical things it takes to maintain quiet, while men of good will try to find a way through to peace.

The history of these peacekeepers is the best evidence of their effectiveness. The periods when they were not present are the best argument for their continued relevance. The lessons learned from nearly fifty years of peacekeeping in the Sinai have the inherent value that we find in all such examinations of military operations. In this case they also illuminate the continued necessity for an effective peacekeeping force in the Sinai Desert.

#### Lessons Learned

An analysis of peacekeeping in the Sinai reveals numerous valuable insights for the military and diplomatic professional contemplating peacekeeping operations. Foremost is the primary lesson of UNEF1: peacekeeping forces should only be utilized in the context of an overall diplomatic effort. This notion implies that the peacekeepers are inserted only at the behest of, and in coordination with, both belligerents. The second lesson of UNEF1 is that peacekeepers do not make peace. Peacekeepers help to set conditions in which nations can make peace. In setting the conditions for peace, UNEF1 was effective. The downfall of the UNEF1 mission was the ineffectiveness of the diplomatic effort.

UNEF1 confirmed Dag Hammarskjöld's judgment that peacekeeping required soldiers. The harsh climactic conditions of the Sinai and skill sets required for counter-insurgency operations in the Gaza Strip demonstrated the necessity of soldiers as peacekeepers. The complete lack of fedayeen activity or Israeli incursions in the Gaza Strip and Sinai, between 1957 and 1967 makes a compelling case for the effectiveness of this peacekeeping force.

The experience of UNEF1 teaches that we must find ways to get antagonists to talk to one another. The refusal of Egypt to neither recognize the Israeli nation, nor talk with their leadership face to face, aggravated the situation in the Sinai post 1956, and eventually led to the failure of UNEF1 and the 1967 War.

Another lesson to be drawn from the UNEF1 experience is the necessity for both warring parties to be involved in the peacekeeping process. The lack of coordination and consultation with Israel over the insertion of UNEF1 did not have a significant effect on the eventual hostilities between the Egyptians and Israelis. However, it did have a significant opportunity cost. Peacekeeping is a fabulous opportunity to build trust and confidence between two antagonists, as we discovered during the withdrawal of UNEF2.

Despite the absence of peacekeepers, the period from 1967-1973 in the Sinai holds lessons learned as well. This period is characterized as "the ceasefire that wasn't." At first glance, it is a good example of when not to use peacekeepers. However, there are other lessons to be learned. The War of Attrition took place during this period and provides an example of a diplomatic effort in the absence of peacekeeping forces. While numerous attempts were made to find a diplomatic solution, the Egyptians pounded Israeli troops with artillery. The Israelis responded with air raids deep into Egypt. The



open hostility between the countries negated any common ground they had for starting a peaceful dialogue. This is not to say that diplomacy cannot work without peacekeepers, but in a case where two belligerent armies are in close contact daily, they are clearly useful, even prerequisite. From 1967-1973 the constant drumbeat of war in the canal zone made diplomacy futile.

The impotence of the UNTSO observers from 1967-1973, and their tragic circumstance at the beginning of the 1973 war is a brilliant lesson on the misuse of neutral personnel, be they peacekeepers or observers. The antagonistic attitude displayed by both armies early in the UNTSO mission should have triggered immediate withdrawal. Failure to do so by the UN resulted in a general lack of confidence in UN efforts, a confidence that had to be re-earned by the soldiers of UNEF2. Respect for the mission, as well as freedom of movement and communications are basic prerequisites for any peacekeeping mission, and were denied in that case.

Many of the positive lessons learned from the peacekeeping forces that have served in the Sinai come from UNEF2. The remarkable effectiveness of this mission also reinforces the lessons learned from UNEF1 and the “War of Attrition.” Israel and Egypt were both involved in the introduction of peacekeepers from the beginning. Both nations tested their limits in the early days, but UNEF2 proved its mettle. The “Finnish birching” incident and the execution of Operation Calendar (IDF withdrawal from the west bank of the Suez Canal) provide evidence at both the tactical and operational levels of peacekeeping of the necessity of soldiers in the role of peacekeeper.<sup>2</sup>

The face to face determination of every detail of the ceasefire, and subsequent agreements in the tent at Kilometer 101, was the start of confidence building between the

foes. The difference between peacekeeper as facilitator in UNEF2, versus go between in UNEF1 should be underlined. The belligerents must talk to each other, nations make peace.

Most important, and the object lesson of peacekeeping in the Sinai is the synergy developed by effective peacekeepers and a sustained diplomatic effort between 1974 and 1978. UNEF2 played a critical supporting role, while the United States helped Egypt and Israel come together in a peace process leading first to the Camp David framework, and then to the Treaty of Peace between the nations. Peacekeepers can only be successful in the presence of a diplomatic effort to settle the root causes of the conflict.

### Present Day

The Multinational Force and Observers remains vigilant along the international border between Israel and Egypt, and in the Straits of Tiran. The governments of Egypt and Israel remain adamant that the MFO continue its service. The United States Government recently announced modest force reductions in the Sinai, but remains supportive, after a significant debate regarding the role of the US Army in the MFO. It appears certain that the long service of peacekeepers in the Sinai will continue into the foreseeable future.

The MFO has been highly effective because it took the lessons of the linkage between the diplomatic and military aspects of peacekeeping and institutionalized them. However, the MFO cannot make peace. The Palestinian problem makes the peace between Israel and Egypt uneasy at times and it is not beyond the realm of possibility that renewed violence in the West Bank and Gaza could render the peace treaty untenable. The MFO is a visible symbol of the US role as guarantor of that peace.

## Conclusion

Over the past twenty years, the MFO has maintained quiet while the various initiatives aimed at solving the Palestinian problem have run their course. It seems certain that the MFO will be necessary until a comprehensive peace is established between Israel and her neighbors, certainly until the Palestinian problem is resolved. The history of peacekeeping in the Sinai Desert leads to the inescapable conclusion that the peacekeepers there have been remarkably effective, and that they remain relevant and necessary, today and for the foreseeable future.

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<sup>1</sup>The Camp David Accords, Annex a.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter 4, 54.

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