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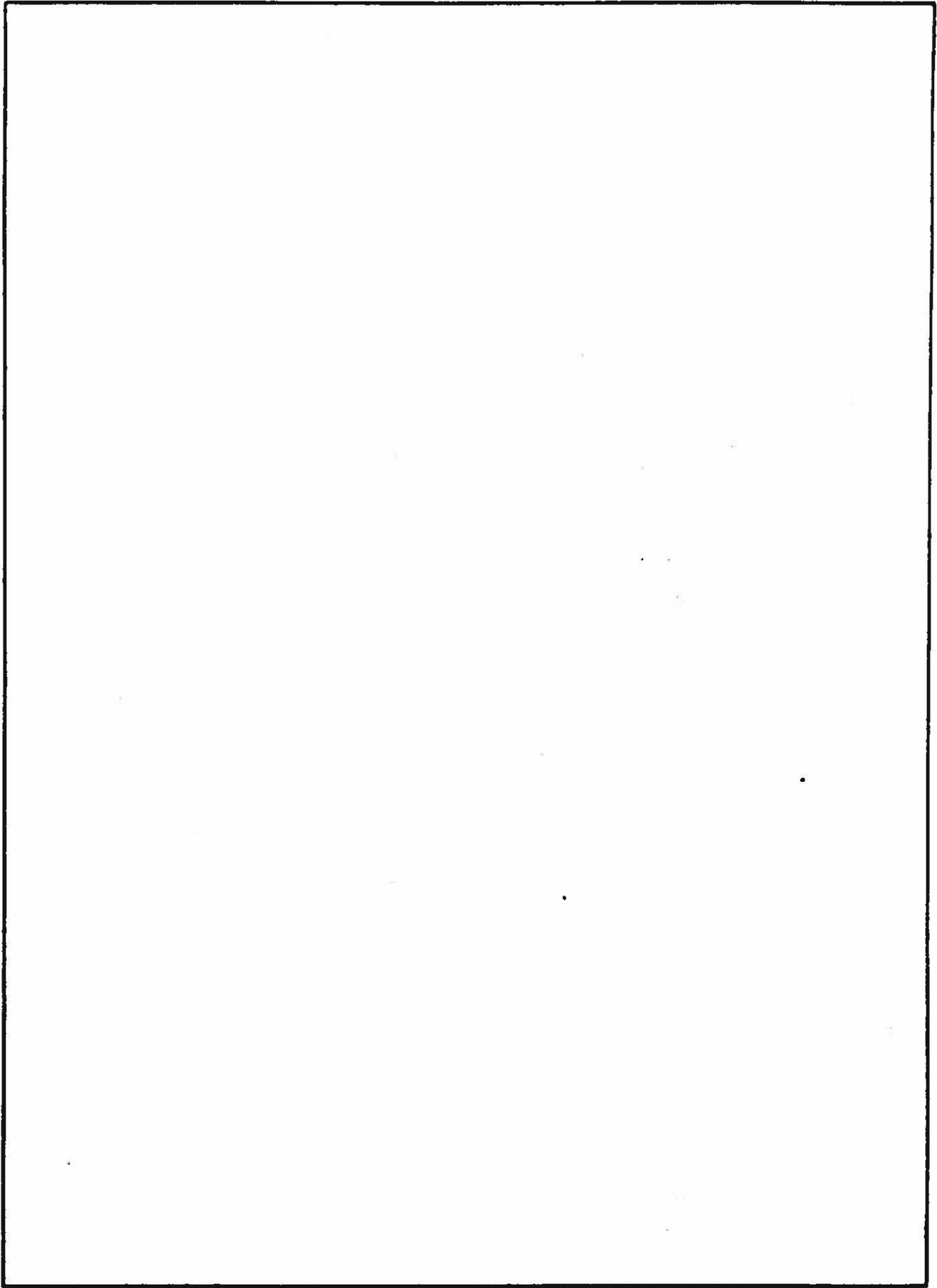
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## PREFACE

The historiography of the Suez Crisis is made up of differing accounts and incompatible conclusions drawn from the public record. To the author's knowledge this paper is the first to be based on a complete study of the classified records of the State and Defense Departments. The conclusions set forth here are interpretations, but are based on examination of original records.

The materials used for this study were State Department telegrams, memos of conversation, and summaries; Navy messages and reports; the Dulles Oral History; and personal interviews.

This study is more than a recitation of history. The events of the 1956 Suez Crisis, and its aftermath, profoundly affected the subsequent history of the Middle East and the relations among the Western powers and the Soviet Union. The parallels of U. S. - Soviet interactions in the 1956 crisis to their interactions in the 1967, 1970, and 1973 crises are striking, and should not be forgotten.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ALUSNA	American Legation, U. S. Naval Attache
AMCONGEN	American Consulate General
AMEMB	American Embassy
CAS	Controlled American Source
CINCLANTFLT	Commander in Chief Atlantic Fleet
CINCNELM	Commander in Chief, Naval Forces Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean
CINCNELM REAR	Commander in Chief, Naval Forces Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean, Rear Echelon (London)
CINCPACFLT	Commander in Chief, U. S. Pacific Fleet
CINCSPECOMME	Commander in Chief, Specified Command Middle East (a second hat worn by CINCNELM)
COMANTISUBLANT	Commander, Antisubmarine Forces, Atlantic
COMEASTSEAFRON	Commander, Eastern Sea Frontier
COMIDEASTFOR	Commander, Middle East Force
COMSIXTHFLT	Commander, U. S. Sixth Fleet
CNO	Chief of Naval Operations
CTF	Commander, Task Force
IDF	Israel Defense Forces
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
MIDEASTFOR	U. S. Middle East Force
R. A. F.	Royal Air Force (Great Britain)
SCUA	Suez Canal Users Association
UNEF	United Nations Emergency Force
UNTSO	U. N. Truce Supervisory Organization
USARMA	U. S. Army Attache
WESTPAC	Western Pacific



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## SYNOPSIS

### EVENTS OF THE SUEZ CRISIS

It is not easy to ascertain the beginning and closing dates of the crisis from the viewpoint of the Sixth Fleet. The Fleet began a build-up in the eastern Mediterranean as early as February, 1956 as an Israeli-Jordanian war was expected. The diplomatic occasion for the crisis usually cited -- and the point at which the study begins -- is July 1956 when John Foster Dulles withdrew the U. S. offer to aid Egypt in building the Aswan High Dam. Giving a date to the end of the crisis is elusive. The crisis situation could be said to have ended with the U. N. cease-fire in November, the withdrawal of French and British troops in December, or the withdrawal of Israeli troops in the Spring of 1957. For purposes of this analysis, the crisis ends in December 1956, when Commander-in-Chief, Naval Forces, Eastern Atlantic (CINCNELM) returned to London, after the threat of a U. S. - Soviet conflict had abated.

On October 20, 1955 the State Department announced the U. S. intention to aid Egypt in the building of the Aswan High Dam. Great Britain decided to share in the financing, and on December 16, 1955 a formal Anglo-American offer to grant Egypt \$84 million was made. A proposed World Bank loan to Egypt of \$200 million was contingent on the Anglo-American grant. There began a diplomatic tug of war over the conditions attached to the offers. While Egyptian President Nasser accepted the requirements of the World Bank in February, 1956, he stipulated some Egyptian conditions. Both Nasser and Secretary of State Dulles began to delay the Aswan Dam negotiations. On July 19, 1956 Dulles informed Egyptian Ambassador Hussein of his decision to withdraw the offer of a grant for the High Dam. Since the entire scheme was dependent on U. S. participation, Great Britain and the World Bank withdrew as well.

In a speech on July 26, 1956 Nasser announced Egyptian nationalization of the Suez Canal while, simultaneously, his officers quietly took control of the Canal Company offices in Egypt. Washington's official reaction to the Canal seizure was temperate, but the governments of Britain and France officially declared their outrage and quietly ordered plans for the military invasion of Egypt to be prepared. The integrated command for an Anglo-French joint military venture in the Mediterranean was appointed.

At the end of the week President Eisenhower dispatched Dulles to London for discussions with British Prime Minister Anthony Eden and French Foreign Minister Christian Pineau. Dulles proposed an international conference to help mobilize world opinion against Egypt's running of the Suez Canal. While Eden and French President Mollet agreed to the conference method, they continued planning for military action.

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The international conference met in London on August 16 and ended on August 23. A draft declaration (formulated by Dulles) proposing an internationalized canal, assuring Egypt a fair return, and calling for the negotiation of a new Suez Canal convention was passed and signed by eighteen nations while the Soviet Union and Egypt led the dissenters. Robert Menzies, the Prime Minister of Australia, conveyed the proposal to Nasser who rejected it.

Dulles produced a second plan whereby the users of Suez would ban together and run the canal. On September 12, Dulles announced his plan to form a Suez Canal Users Association (SCUA). On September 19 the eighteen powers again met in London. Eden and Pineau, disappointed at the lack of forcefulness in SCUA, decided to take the crisis to the U.N. Security Council.

The U.N. slowly began preparing to discuss the Suez question. On October 5 the Security Council began hearings on Suez. On October 12 secret Anglo-French-Egyptian talks with Hammarskjold produced six working principles which were agreed upon. The next day, the Soviet Union vetoed an Anglo-French resolution and the secret talks were abandoned. At that same moment French and Israeli military leaders were meeting in Paris to plan a coordinated attack on Egypt. On October 14 the French approached Britain about the Israeli plan to attack Egypt and noted this would be a good excuse for a joint Anglo-French operation to "separate the combatants." On October 16 Eden and British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd flew to Paris where the joint intervention was agreed upon.

Israel started partial mobilization on October 15 as British and French naval forces began "routine" exercises in the Mediterranean. On October 24, the day Ben Gurion got Eden and Mollet to approve the collusive plan in writing, Russian troops moved into Budapest to crush the Hungarian revolt -- Washington had to deal with two crises. On October 27 the State Department realized that the Israeli mobilization was massive and Eisenhower contacted Ben Gurion strongly urging that the Israelis abandon any plans for military action. Israeli Ambassador Eban assured Dulles that no offensive moves would be made. On October 29 Israeli forces launched a massive invasion of Egypt.

The Suez war began just days after the Hungarian Revolution and a week before the American Presidential elections. With Anglo-French air cover and French destroyers protecting its coast Israel marched across the Sinai. At Malta the Anglo-French armada began to move east. Two task forces of the U. S. Sixth Fleet were sent to Alexandria and Haifa for evacuation of Americans.

On October 30 Eden announced the (pre-planned) Anglo-French ultimatum to Egypt and Israel. It called for a withdrawal of military forces to a distance of 10 miles from the canal (the Israelis were then 25 miles away and could advance); Egyptian agreement to the occupation by Anglo-French forces of Port Said, Ismailia, and Suez; and twelve

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hours in which to accept the ultimatum. Egypt refused it. The Anglo-French assault fleet had already set sail and the R. A. F. began bombing Egypt. The U.S. made every effort to stop its allies through the U.N. On November 1 Dulles went to the U.N. to urge a cease-fire and withdrawal. The U.S. resolution was passed by the U.N. Egypt accepted the cease-fire on November 2. The main forces of the Anglo-French armada were still three days sailing time from Egypt.

On November 3 Eden announced Anglo-French rejection of the cease-fire. While he was speaking hostilities in the Sinai ceased. But the invasion force continued. The Sixth Fleet, still in the middle of evacuations, found itself across the path of the approaching armada in a few areas.

On November 5 British parachutists landed at the Cairo Airport beginning the first helicopter-borne amphibious assault ever made. That afternoon the Suez crisis took on a new dimension. Soviet Premier Bulganin sent notes to the governments of Great Britain, France and Israel in which he threatened Soviet action. A number of Soviet military movements were reported on November 6. The CNO's estimate was that the Soviets would "probably send volunteers" to the Middle East.

Prime Minister Eden, acceding to the wishes of his cabinet, accepted the U.N. cease-fire on the evening of November 6 just hours after British naval forces went ashore on Egyptian beaches. The French also acquiesced. The cease-fire went into effect, but the Russians continued to recruit "volunteers" and rumors of Soviet military movements continued to be passed through Western intelligence channels. By November 8 the entire U.S. Navy was put on war-time alert with readiness to implement emergency war plans.

The United Nations moved quickly in assembling an emergency force which began arriving in Egypt on November 15. The crisis was diminishing. On December 3 Lloyd announced the imminent withdrawal of Anglo-French forces and Israel drew back thirty miles from the canal. On December 13 CINCNELM returned to London and the crisis was over as far as the U.S. Navy was concerned. By December 22 the British and French had completed their withdrawal. The Israelis, under great pressure from Eisenhower, evacuated all their conquered territory on March 6, 1957. On March 29 the first convoy went through a newly opened Suez Canal.

## ANALYSIS OF THE EVENTS

The major findings of the analysis are summarized here, and the evidence is presented in detail in the later chapters.

John Foster Dulles withdrew the Aswan Dam offer without regard to British preferences and in the absence of any policy planning or estimates. No one expected Nasser to

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retaliate by nationalizing the Suez Canal. The British and French, outraged at Nasser's move, endeavored to get U. S. backing for a military venture. Dulles did imply that there would be U. S. military support if good faith diplomatic efforts failed. Indeed our military worked with the British throughout the summer as did our intelligence. It was not until late in the summer of 1956 that Dulles entirely dismissed the idea of backing the British and French with force. In the end, the Sixth Fleet was more of a hindrance than a help to the British and French expeditionary forces.

The Israelis decided to attack Egypt long before the Arab Defense Pact was concluded and after Nasser opened the canal to Israel-bound ships. The Anglo-French-Israeli plan for attack was written down and signed as a treaty. When it became evident that U. S. diplomatic support was not forthcoming, the Israelis jumped the gun on the British and French -- attacking early and, although using French pilots, leaving the Franco-British armada little time to reach the Eastern Mediterranean.

Members of the U. S. National Security Council debated whether to aid their European allies with Sixth Fleet support. Indeed, both Eisenhower and General Twining have said that the U. S. would probably have joined the fighting on the side of Britain and France if those countries had handled the situation differently. Movements of the Sixth Fleet indicate that its role was a low-risk attempt to protect Egypt, or at least to stall the fighting until the U. N. could intervene.

Nasser requested active Sixth Fleet intervention to forestall Soviet "aid". Perceived evidence of Soviet movements toward the area put the Sixth Fleet and all U. S. Naval Forces on full alert. The Soviet threat to retaliate against the French, British and Israelis with missiles put the U. S. Navy on a war footing and finally brought NATO into play. Britain and France requested a definition of NATO and its application to Allied forces in the Mediterranean. The U. S. reply (which was relayed to the Soviet Union) was that NATO did apply in the event of an attack on those forces and that the U. S. would oppose with force any Soviet military interference. The question of "what are the obligations of an ally" came under consideration. The position "my ally right or wrong" was not taken by the U. S. Washington did maintain that the North Atlantic Treaty required advance consultation if force were to be used (a point which the British and French had breached). However, the U. S. jumped in under NATO when the threat of a Soviet attack became imminent.

Sixth Fleet ships were interspersed with the British-French Navies -- an attack on one would be an attack on all. During Suez, the U. S. had come closer to war with the Soviets than at any time since World War II. The entire U. S. Navy was directed to "maintain readiness to implement emergency war plans."

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## ROLE OF THE SIXTH FLEET

The Sixth Fleet played many roles during the Suez Crisis. When hostilities began the Fleet endeavored to forestall the fighting and although the U.S. turned down an offer of joint action with the Soviets, we were nevertheless joined diplomatically by that opposing great power and arrayed against two of our oldest allies and one of our youngest clients. The Sixth Fleet then turned to deterring Soviet intervention.

A third role of the Sixth Fleet was the protection of U.S. citizens and investments. Amphibious task forces evacuated 2000 people from the area in the midst of hostilities. Requests for Sixth Fleet aid came from many countries at different points in the conflict: They came from Egypt, Turkey, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, the U.N., France, and Germany. The Fleet augmented, and in some cases replaced, State Department communications facilities. Lastly, the Fleet gave logistic support to the incoming U.N. Force without which the end of the crisis would have been delayed.

To a great extent U.S. opposition was the strongest factor in ending the war. The Sixth Fleet, first in its role of reproof onlooker, and second in its array against Soviet intervention, did have a stabilizing effect.

## THE CONSEQUENCES OF SUEZ

A result of Suez, the Eisenhower Doctrine (which was announced December 31, 1956) formally declared that any Russian intervention in the area would at once be met by the United States with force if all else failed. This represented the first American assumption of independent guarantees to the Arab World.

Soviet gains of the 1955-56 period in the area combined with the lack of clearly defined goals on the part of the U.S. saw the Middle East turn almost overnight from an Anglo-French preserve to a new area of confrontation of the cold war powers. The U.S. had to create a new Middle East policy taking into consideration the new setting: stronger Soviet influence, more independent Arab states, and a new operational role for the U.N.



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## EVENTS OF THE SUEZ CRISIS

### THE ASWAN DECISION

The Suez Crisis of 1956 had its origins in the U. S. decision not to finance construction of Egypt's Aswan High Dam. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles' withdrawal of the Aswan High Dam offer changed greatly the relationship of the Western powers and the Arab world. It precipitated Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal that in turn resulted in the Anglo-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt, and it destroyed the ever elusive but nearly achieved plans for an Arab-Israeli settlement. The High Dam was to have been the symbol of Washington's newly announced "even-handed" policy. It was to fill the vacuum with aid rather than troops. The decision to withdraw the offer was probably more completely the act of John Foster Dulles than any other major foreign policy decision of the Eisenhower years.

#### The U. S. Offer to Finance the High Dam

In Cairo on October 12, 1955, the Soviet Ambassador, Daniel Solod, delivered to Nasser a Russian offer for the High Dam. On October 17 in Washington, Egyptian Ambassador Hussein called on Secretary Dulles to say that Egypt would prefer a U. S. aid and let him know that this would prevent Egypt from becoming a Soviet satellite. On October 20, Washington announced the U. S. intention to help the Egyptians build their dam.

This opportunity held great appeal for the U. S. which hoped Nasser would begin to "concentrate more upon internal socio-economic reform than upon regional imperial ambitions."<sup>1</sup> It gave Secretary Dulles a chance to put into practice his newly announced policy of non-preferential treatment in the Middle East. It would bring stability to the area by building up the economic rather than the military strength of Israel's neighbors and keep the U. S. from having to increase its military presence in the Middle East. By offering to help finance the High Dam, the U. S. was overcoming the temptation to provide aid in narrowly anti-Communist terms. Nevertheless, it could not resist the desire to attach a political rider, stating that its action would bring Egypt firmly into the Western camp and encourage an Arab-Israeli settlement.

In September 1955 Egypt and the Soviet Union had concluded an agreement in which the Soviets were to send Egypt \$200 million worth of arms in exchange for some Egyptian cotton. The Egyptian-Soviet agreement spurred the State Department to action. It was

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<sup>1</sup>James E. Dougherty, "The Aswan Decision in Perspective," Political Science Quarterly (March, 1959), p. 37.

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felt in Washington that U. S. aid for the High Dam would so overshadow Soviet aid that Egyptians would steer clear of further involvement with the Russians. It was also hoped that Nasser, an Arab hero because of the arms agreement, would gain such prominence and security that he might be able to compromise in a settlement with Israel. Under Secretary of State, Herbert Hoover, Jr., convinced Dulles to make the Dam part of a larger Near East settlement.

On August 6, 1955, Dulles had made a major policy speech in which he offered to help overcome the obstacles to an Arab-Israeli peace. Knowing Nasser's great longing for a Western-aided High Dam, Dulles could give him an incentive to negotiate. Nasser, on the other hand, resisted any political conditions to an economic arrangement. But he was aware that his new stature made it easier for him to try for peace. Nasser praised British Prime Minister Eden's November 9 peace proposal (made during his annual Guild Hall Speech). On November 25, Egypt announced in the U.N. its acceptance of negotiations conducted through an intermediary.

Eisenhower and Dulles chose to provide the intermediary. Robert Anderson was appointed to go on the highly secret mission and went to Tel Aviv and Cairo. Ambassador Byroade in Cairo was concerned with the Administration's linking of the Aswan High Dam offer with the success of the Anderson mission. He wired to Dulles his worry that if the secret talks failed for any reason at all, Washington would retaliate against Nasser, but Dulles assured Byroade that he would not retaliate.<sup>1</sup>

On August 30, 1955, the World Bank had reported to Egypt that the Aswan High Dam proposal was both technically and economically sound. The Bank's President, Eugene Black, reaffirmed this appraisal even after the Soviet-Egyptian arms arrangement. On November 21, the Egyptian Finance Minister met with representatives of the World Bank in Washington to reconfirm their positions. The next day Egyptians met with Under-secretary of State Hoover and George Allen (Assistant Secretary for Near East and South Asia) who supported the position taken by the World Bank.<sup>2</sup>

The outcome was a joint offer made on December 16, 1955. The United States offered a grant of \$70 million and Great Britain \$14 million to defray foreign exchange costs for the first stage of five years. The Anglo-American offer was limited and made no long-term commitments, stating both would "be prepared to consider sympathetically, in the light of then existing circumstances," further support towards financing the later

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<sup>1</sup>U. S. State Department, #2515 from Cairo (June 16, 1956) and interview with Eugene Black (November 13, 1969).

<sup>2</sup>U. S. State Department, Memo of Conversation, November 22, 1955.

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stages to supplement World Bank financing.<sup>1</sup> Subsequent grants and loans were expected to amount to \$130 million, and the entire project was to last 15 years. The World Bank offered a loan of \$200 million at 5 percent interest for forty years, but this offer was contingent on the Anglo-American grant. Thus the combined fifteen year assistance was expected to be \$400 million, with Egypt providing most of the costs of labor and materials. Nasser called the offer "the high point in his relations with the United States."<sup>2</sup>

On February 9, Nasser formally accepted the World Bank condition of a voice in Egyptian economic policy. He accompanied this acceptance by government-controlled radio attacks on U. S. conditions. Then Nasser began to stall by stipulating he wanted agreement with the Sudan first.

## British Concerns About the Middle East

Late in January of 1956, British Prime Minister Eden became distressed over what he determined to be Russian moves to expand in the Middle East. Eden saw the Soviets working with the Saudis, Syrians, and Egyptians to take control of oil "so necessary to the defense and economy of the West."<sup>3</sup> On January 30th, Eden and Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd came to Washington to encourage Dulles to take a harder line in the Near East. An effort should be made to work with Nasser, but, as Eden said: "If his attitude on this and other matters was that he would not cooperate, we would both have to reconsider our policy towards him."<sup>4</sup> It was decided the Aswan Dam was to be left up in the air.

In contrast to the haziness and uncertainty which surrounds Secretary Dulles' change of mind, Prime Minister Eden's can be pinpointed almost to the day. On March 1st, King Hussein of Jordan sent for Lieutenant-General John Glubb -- the Englishman who had commanded the Arab legion for eighteen years -- and dismissed him "at a moment's notice."<sup>5</sup> Glubb Pasha was one of the last evidences of the British Empire in the Near East. The expulsion of this revered Arabophile and the injury to British pride, Eden attributed to Nasser's hand.

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<sup>1</sup> Kennett Love, Suez, The Twice-Fought War (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), p. 311.

<sup>2</sup> John Connell, The Most Important Country (London: Wyman and Sons, 1957), p. 87.

<sup>3</sup> Louis L. Gerson, John Foster Dulles (New York: Cooper Square, 1967), p. 273 (Gerson used Dulles' private papers in this book).

<sup>4</sup> Love, op. cit., p. 313.

<sup>5</sup> Colin Cross, The Fall of the British Empire (New York: Coward-McCann, 1969), p. 316.



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In March, British Foreign Secretary Lloyd went to Bahrein where he was stoned by men he was convinced were Nasser agents. Lloyd went back to London livid and "completely hostile" to Nasser. Eden's anger was festering.

By March 12, Eden's anger burst into rage and he shouted to Anthony Nutting at the Savoy Hotel that he didn't want Nasser isolated or neutralized, he wanted him destroyed!<sup>1</sup>

The unfortunate incident snow-balled out of proportion. It later became apparent that King Hussein had dismissed Glubb for personal reasons and on his own initiative. But Parliament began sneering at Eden's ineptitude in the Near East. Rumors of the Prime Minister's resignation were rampant, and Eden was forced to publicly deny them.

Later in March, Eden wrote Dulles of the two alternatives he thought open to them: (1) establish a modus vivendi with Egypt, giving Nasser economic aid, and suspending arms deliveries to Israel; or (2) ignore Egypt and attempt to stabilize the Near East by isolating Nasser. He wrote Eisenhower of Cairo's increasingly anti-Western propaganda and of the Russian determination to liquidate the Baghdad Pact. Eden said the only way to stop Nasser was to have the U.S. join the Pact.<sup>2</sup>

Both Eisenhower and Dulles still had confidence that Nasser was their key to peace in the Near East and that they could convince him of the disadvantages of leaning toward the Soviet bloc. Dulles did "not want a break, which might force Nasser into the arms of the Bear."<sup>3</sup> He decided a mild reaction would be to postpone grain shipments to Egypt, deny arms to Israel and Egypt, and delay arrangements for the High Dam. Dulles was not willing to participate in the Baghdad Pact because he believed U.S. participation would frighten the Arabs and cause Israel to demand a security treaty from the U.S. Eden was placated by an American offer to give Britain a hand, both overt and covert, in stabilizing King Hussein's government.<sup>4</sup> Eisenhower informed the British that any move toward dropping Nasser would ruin prospects of an Arab-Israeli settlement.

Early in April, Washington turned a deaf ear to Eden's pleas. Dulles was still trying to look on Nasser's good side. At a press conference on April 3, the Secretary of State said he believed Nasser to be "actuated primarily by a desire to maintain genuine independence in the area." He stated that "Egypt has taken no irrevocable decision to repudiate ties with the West or to accept anything like vassalage to the Soviet Union."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Love, op. cit., pp. 213-215.

<sup>2</sup> Gerson, op. cit., p. 274.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 276.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 276.

<sup>5</sup> The New York Times (April 4, 1956), p. 1.

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## The Effect of the Arab-Israeli Conflict

Dulles was still working for a peace settlement through Anderson. The Ambassador's secret mission seemed to be gaining results on the Arab side. On March 22, it was reported that Nasser was willing to modify demands and would discuss anything through Anderson.<sup>1</sup> The Israeli Prime Minister Ben Gurion then brought everything to a halt by reiterating the usual Israeli demand for direct talks with Nasser, knowing full well how impossible and personally dangerous this would be for the Arab leader. On March 28, Israeli Ambassador Abba Eban appeared in the office of the Secretary of State with a bargain. If the United States would give Israel the arms it wanted, Ben Gurion would enter peace negotiations through an intermediary.<sup>2</sup> Dulles found that demand unreasonable and impossible to meet.

Both Dulles and Nasser continued to delay the High Dam negotiations. Dulles declined to answer Nasser's letters. Nasser, although himself willing to accept the terms as they were, was not averse to delaying final acceptance in the hope that a stronger position in the East would bring mollification in the West.

The State Department was uncertain about proceeding with negotiations. Washington officials decided to wait until Nasser became more agreeable. They decided "that delaying tactics should be employed, at least for the time being, so that we will not be in the position either of breaking off negotiations or of giving the Egyptians encouragement to believe that we are anxious to complete the arrangements.... It is our thought that, in view of the possibility that the Egyptians might decide to enter into a contract with the Soviet Union for the Dam project, we should make every effort to develop a situation in Sudan whereby a Nile waters agreement between Sudan and Egypt could be blocked."<sup>3</sup>

In the meantime, Israel had turned to France for the arms denied her by the U. S. The French, infuriated by Nasser's aid to the rebel Algerians, were anxious to aid the Israelis. Under NATO arrangements and the Middle East Arms Agreement, Paris was required to get permission from Washington before sending arms to Israel. Dulles informed the French that he "would not object to the shipment of twelve Mystere IV jet fighters ordered by Israel."<sup>4</sup> But neither the French nor the Israelis stopped there. By devious means, including twice circulating authorization slips through the Defense Ministry, the French sent many more jets and other arms than the U. S. approved or

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<sup>1</sup> U. S. State Department, Telegram #696 to Tel Aviv (March 22, 1956).

<sup>2</sup> U. S. State Department, memo of conversation (March 28, 1956).

<sup>3</sup> U. S. State Department, memo from Rountree to Hoover (April 3, 1956).

<sup>4</sup> Love, op. cit., p. 117.

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knew about. Eisenhower wrote in his memoirs: "later these 'twelve' mystere fighters would display a rabbit-like capacity for multiplication."<sup>1</sup> The U. S. knew of fifteen such deliveries by mid-April alone.

On April 5, the Israelis bombed downtown Gaza on market day, killing 63 and wounding 102. The Fedayeen retaliated with a five-day wave of terror during which 14 Israelis were killed. General Burns, the U. N. mediator, pleaded with Washington to restrain Israel from retaliating. Dulles said the U. S. would "support and assist" either side which might be subject to aggression. The warning was supported by the movement of Sixth Fleet to the Eastern Mediterranean.

In mid-April Nasser grew alarmed by reports of continuing large-scale shipments of French arms to Israel. He announced preparations for a second major arms contract with the Russians. The U. S. reply was not a threat to Nasser, but to the Soviet Union. Washington informed the Russians that "we reserve our full freedom to enter an arms race anytime we wish and while we would be more reluctant to do so, large [Soviet] shipments are tending to force us to do so."<sup>2</sup>

On April 27 Khrushchev, during a visit to England, announced the Soviet Union would join a U. N. embargo on arms deliveries to the Middle East. Nasser found himself staring at more secret French deliveries to Israel and realized such an embargo would not affect these clandestine movements. He turned to the only non-U. N. power capable of meeting his arms needs -- Communist China. On May 16, Nasser recognized the Peking Government. He underestimated Dulles' unhappiness at the move.

As it became more evident that the U. S. Congress would not approve appropriations for the Aswan Dam out of FY 56 funds, Dulles endeavored to keep the negotiations open as he wished to "avoid giving Egyptians pretext for announcing agreement with Soviets on basis of U. S. refusal."<sup>3</sup> The State Department informed Cairo that "in the circumstances we should utilize for other purposes the funds now set aside for the Aswan Dam and rely upon future appropriations for financing the U. S. grant contribution to the Aswan Dam when appropriate agreements have been reached."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Love, op. cit., p. 117.

<sup>2</sup> U. S. State Department, memo from Allen to Rountree (April 18, 1956).

<sup>3</sup> U. S. State Department, #2815 to Cairo (n. d.).

<sup>4</sup> U. S. State Department, #2815 to Cairo (n. d.).

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The State Department was, at that time, aware that the Soviets were "exerting strong pressure on Egypt to conclude the High Dam Deal."<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the Russians were becoming anxious about a possible Western withdrawal. On the other hand, perhaps they were aware of declining Anglo-American interest and saw in a withdrawal their opportunity to step into a Middle East rebuffed by the West. Whatever the Soviet analysis, Dulles was not going to make a decision on the matter until after Soviet Foreign Minister Shepilov's upcoming visit to Cairo. If the West withdrew the offer, Nasser might take a Soviet one; if Dulles confirmed the aid, Shepilov in Cairo would have a chance to negotiate a better offer.

President Eisenhower was anxious to maintain the status quo in the Near East. He developed a plan which "would have important advantages in its demonstration of complete impartiality between the Arabs (primarily Egypt) and the Israelis." The plan was to use a ship in the Sixth Fleet to store "appreciable quantities of military equipment" and to have that ship cruise in the Eastern Mediterranean "ready for instant dispatch to any nation in the Middle East which might be a victim of aggression."<sup>2</sup>

By mid-June Dulles found himself again under pressure to move against Nasser. The pro-Israeli lobby in the U. S. demanded abandonment of the Aswan Dam proposal. Lloyd indicated Britain's preference for isolating the Egyptian President. The Egyptians denied two U. S. Sixth Fleet vessels passage through the Suez Canal because the masters refused to divulge information they considered classified. The U. S. Government made a formal protest. Then Pineau went to Washington to persuade Dulles to take action against Nasser. The French Foreign Minister said "The American Government showed itself at the time to be rather hesitant."<sup>3</sup> By the end of the month Dulles was getting impatient for a good sign from Cairo. Several Egyptian officials approached Americans in Cairo imploring them to "get word through that some gesture of understanding or friendship however small from Washington before 18 June was desperately needed and might forestall moves toward Soviet bloc."<sup>4</sup>

In July, Dulles again came under pressure not to renege on the Dam. The Italian Minister said he thought the West should be "particularly energetic" in trying to win this round in Egypt before the Soviets could get in. The Italians were assured that "the offer

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<sup>1</sup> U. S. State Department, #2438 from Cairo (June 8, 1956).

<sup>2</sup> Love, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

<sup>3</sup> Love, *ibid.*, p. 290.

<sup>4</sup> U. S. State Department, memo from Kermit Roosevelt (June 14, 1956).



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still stands: and only the appropriations were a problem." It was also stated that the U. S. was still waiting for a Nile Waters Agreement with the Sudan.<sup>1</sup> The British Ambassador saw Dulles, delivering the message that the U. K. now wanted the Dam to be part of an offer for unified development of the Nile Valley. Eugene Black wrote a letter to Egyptian Finance Minister Kaissuny reiterating the assurance that "the World Bank will finance the High Dam scheme" and urging Nasser to speedily accept the offer.<sup>2</sup>

On Monday July 16 the Senate Appropriations Committee passed the Foreign Aid Bill with a rider demanding Congressional authorization for funds to be used for the Aswan Dam. The next day, July 17, it was apparent that Dulles had not yet made a decision. He was angry at Congress and pointed out -- while Senators agreed -- that he was still not bound by the rider and could make the loan if he wished.<sup>3</sup>

## Maneuvering and Withdrawal of the U. S. Offer

On July 18, the day before Egyptian Ambassador Hussein was to meet with Dulles, Assistant Secretary of State Rountree told the British that no decision on the High Dam had been made yet. In London, Selwyn Lloyd was still considering the matter. If in Dulles' judgment the offer was to be rescinded, the British urged him not to be precipitate but to "play it long."<sup>4</sup> A Foreign Office spokesman announced at a press conference that "Britain stands firm on her offer of a grant to help Egypt build a gigantic dam on the Nile above Aswan -- provided Egypt proves she can afford the project."<sup>5</sup>

Dana Adams Schmidt wrote in The New York Times that, according to some close observers of the problem: "If the Egyptian Ambassador indicates that his move is part of a general shift in Egyptian foreign policy toward the West and away from neutralism, the administration would be greatly influenced."<sup>6</sup> Paul Geren told a London Daily Observer correspondent that the decision had not been made. These accounts appeared the morning of July 19. Ambassador Hussein was to see Dulles at 4:30 that afternoon. The Egyptian

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<sup>1</sup> U. S. State Department, memo of conversation (Ortona, Baxter, July 12, 1956).

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Eugene Black (11/13/69).

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Lucius Battle (October, 1969).

<sup>4</sup> Herman Finer, Dulles over Suez (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1964), p. 47 and George E. Kirk, Contemporary Arab Politics (New York: Praeger, 1961), p. 43.

<sup>5</sup> The New York Times, July 20, 1956.

<sup>6</sup> The New York Times, July 17, 1956.

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Ambassador first made contact with a CIA man and told him that Shepilov's offer to build the dam was "frighteningly good" and Hussein asserted on his "word of honor... that if the U. S. - U. K. - World Bank offer is not made firm, Nasser will accept the Soviet offer."<sup>1</sup>

Dulles was anxious to make a cool decision. He telephoned his brother, Director of the CIA. According to Allen Dulles, Foster said: "I've got to see the Egyptian Ambassador at a certain time and I've got to give him an answer on the Aswan Dam. Are we going ahead with it, or are we not?" The answer over the phone from Allen was "no!"<sup>2</sup>

Then the Secretary met with the President, Hoover, Robert Murphy, and Rountree. Dulles pointed out that internal economic conditions in Egypt had changed markedly. He also noted that "whoever undertook the venture would undoubtedly become unpopular with the Egyptian people due to the degree of austerity that would have to be imposed upon their economy."<sup>3</sup> Eisenhower agreed that Nasser was difficult and there was a risk that we might, in the long run, lose the friendship of the Egyptian people. He thought that it would be unwise to proceed with the offer. Eisenhower later said: "Of course, I understood they'd (the Egyptians) already been warned -- this statement was just giving our own public the information."<sup>4</sup>

Dulles instructed William Burdett to inform Eugene Black of the proposed withdrawal and press statement, "making clear that we had not yet finally determined whether or not to release the statement."<sup>5</sup>

Ambassador Hussein arrived promptly in Dulles' office. Dulles rather liked the Egyptian ambassador. Hussein had been a good friend of the West, and, much to Nasser's chagrin, ardently pro-American. He and Dulles began with a little friendly chit-chat. According to George V. Allen, who was present, the Ambassador "eulogized the High Dam, emphasized Nasser's strength of vision, and said how much he, Hussein, wanted the U. S. to do it. He showed that he realized we had problems."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> U. S. Department of State, memo to J. F. Dulles from F. H. Russell.

<sup>2</sup> Allen Dulles, interview in Dulles Oral History (Princeton University, 1965), p. 75.

<sup>3</sup> U. S. State Department, memo of conversation (Dulles, Hoover, Eisenhower, Murphy, July 19, 1956).

<sup>4</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, Dulles Oral History (Princeton University, 1964), p. 34.

<sup>5</sup> U. S. State Department, memo of conversation (Ilf, Burdett, July 19, 1956).

<sup>6</sup> Love, op. cit., p. 315.

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The Secretary of State was angry at Hussein's declaration of a threat to accept the Soviet offer. However, Dulles managed to keep a kindly but very cool tone to the conversation. He said he "realized the implications in the Ambassador's statements and granted that a Soviet offer might look attractive." He said the U.S. has reluctantly concluded that "it is not feasible for the U.S. to take part. We have to withdraw our offer." Dulles warned Hussein that the Egyptians should "be accutely aware of the dangers to their hard won independence."<sup>1</sup> The Ambassador left, silent and unhappy.

## NATIONALIZATION OF THE SUEZ CANAL

Dulles' renege on the Aswan Dam came at a time when Nasser was basking in his own successes. He had received 99.8 percent of the popular vote in his country's first Presidential election. The last British soldier had just left the Canal Zone after 74 years of occupation. Nasser was in Brioni with Nehru and Tito drafting a communique on their discussions and decisions on ending the Cold War, with Nasser billing the meeting as an international conference of the neutralist "Big Three." When the Egyptian President arrived in Cairo at 2 A.M. on July 20, news of the loan refusal was broken to him by Zakaria Mohyeddin.

### Egyptian Reaction to U. S. Withdrawal from Dam Project

Cairo Radio had been proudly calling Nasser the new Saladin of the Arabs and a leader of the Neutralist world. The timing of Dulles' decision was resented as an effort to counteract the Brioni talks and remove the place in the sun from the neutralists. However, more important than this was the slap in the face afforded by Dulles' impugning of the Egyptian Economy. Nasser was furious at the suggestion that the Egyptian economy was unsound and its credit questionable. Dulles probably reasoned that this implication would deter and embarrass the Soviets from helping Nasser -- He may have been partially correct. But to Nasser: "To create doubt about our economy, to create suspicion on the soundness of our financial policies at a time when we are striving hard to raise our standard of living, could only be interpreted as a move to destroy world confidence in our economic position. They heaped humiliation on top of humiliation. They were addressing themselves to the Egyptian people to overthrow me. That is why I answered back, 'may you choke to death on your fury'."<sup>2</sup>

Egyptian newspapers and radio began a vituperative campaign of verbal violence against the United States. The next day, July 20, Eden further insulted Nasser by

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<sup>1</sup>U.S. State Department, #139 to Cairo (July 21, 1956).

<sup>2</sup>Simon Malley, "And the Answer Was Suez," The Reporter (September 6, 1956), p. 32.

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announcing the withdrawal of Britain's offer to the press before officially informing the Egyptian Ambassador. The next blow came from Moscow where Soviet Foreign Minister Shepilov casually denied any firm Russian offer to build the Dam.

Nasser was staggered by the accumulation of bad news. He felt his career and his very life in jeopardy of being cut short by this embarrassment. He began a series of long conferences with his Cabinet. They calculated the risks of nationalizing the Suez Canal. Nasser himself wrote "an appreciation" of the situation.<sup>1</sup>

On Thursday, July 26, Nasser made a three-hour speech in Liberation Square in which he announced Egyptian nationalization of the Suez Canal. He reviewed in great detail the long negotiations for the Aswan Dam. Nasser mentioned Ferdinand de Lesseps, the French builder of the Canal, and this was the secret signal which sent his men in Cairo, Port Said and Ismailia in motion. Stunned Canal company officials were quietly ushered out of their offices as the Egyptians took control.

Nasser announced that revenues from the Canal would pay for the Aswan Dam. He promised compensation to the shareholders, froze the company's assets in Egypt, and forbade abandonment by company employees.

Nasser's seizure caught the State Department by surprise. Dulles had surmised that Nasser would either go begging to the Soviets or be forced to abandon the dam with the subsequent loss of prestige, and, some thought, his post.<sup>2</sup> Informally, several Department officials mentioned possible ejection of the Point IV mission or difficulties for the Western business community as well as briefly considering the possibility of a prestige-building attack by Egypt on Israel.<sup>3</sup> Foreign envoys in Washington were astounded that Dulles had failed to consider seizure of the Canal.<sup>4</sup> Eisenhower, when asked if the move had been predicted, answered "no, we hadn't thought about it. As a matter of fact, we were as astonished as anybody else at that speech... when he said he was going to do it. We were a bit astonished, but we weren't so alarmed as the others were."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Kermit Roosevelt (August, 1969).

<sup>2</sup> George V. Allen, Dulles Oral History (Princeton University, 1965, 1966).

<sup>3</sup> U.S. State Department, memos of conversation (Geren, Laboulaye, July 20, 1956; Allen, Couve de Murville, July 25, 1956).

<sup>4</sup> Finer, op. cit., p. 172.

<sup>5</sup> Eisenhower, Dulles Oral History, p. 36.



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## The Threat to Western Interests

For the British, the nationalization was an assault not only on a facility vital to their economy but on their world stature. For the United States "neither American holdings nor American prestige was directly involved. Furthermore, despite Secretary Dulles' dislike of Nasser's neutralism and flirtation with the Soviet bloc, the State Department was not prepared to give him up as a hopeless case."<sup>1</sup> Dulles and Eisenhower, although they took quite seriously the threat to Western interests, did not go along with the British assessment that Nasser was already a Soviet stooge. American interests in the Near East lay primarily in the maintenance of communications facilities (land, air, and sea routes), petroleum supplies, and base rights.

Since the Suez Canal could be used as a means of leverage against the west, the U. S. would have to see to it that "the Canal be insulated from its use as a tool of Egyptian politics in the Middle East."<sup>2</sup> This meant also that the Russians should be prevented from domination of Egyptian policy to the point where the Canal could be used as a Soviet tool. The U. S. Navy needed assurance that its ships could pass freely and without revelation of classified information such as troops carried, destination, or purpose. Admiral Radford pointed out that "the Suez Canal from the military point of view is very important to United States forces. It has an effect on our air and naval forces, because we get a good deal of petroleum products [through Suez] . . . for direct consumption in the area."<sup>3</sup> However, the strategic importance was not as great as it was for Britain simply because America's traditional gateway to the East is its own West Coast.

Radford continued: "The most important aspect of the Suez Canal . . . is that its closure cuts off or greatly reduces oil supplies . . . the great problem from a military point of view would be the readiness of the NATO countries to conduct military operations. That readiness is related to their POL, their petroleum supplies, their air force, their jet fuel, their ships, as well as their industry."<sup>4</sup> Oil was a major factor in the cold war. Dulles told Congress "The United States and her allies could not carry on a prolonged

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<sup>1</sup> George Lenczowski, The Middle East in World Affairs (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1962), p. 514.

<sup>2</sup> Robert R. Bowie, Dulles Oral History (Princeton University, 1964), p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> U. S. Congress, U. S. Senate, Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees, The President's Proposal on the Middle East (hereafter referred to as Hearings), (Washington: Government Printing Office, February, 1957), p. 420.

<sup>4</sup> Hearings, p. 420.

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war without Middle East oil,"<sup>1</sup> and two thirds of Western Europe's oil moved through the Canal. The State Department at the time of the seizure also harbored a fear of the Nasser mood spreading to places such as Syria where U.S.-owned pipelines could be nationalized or sabotaged.<sup>2</sup>

The threat to base rights was two-fold. First, the State Department was of the opinion that any violent French reaction to Suez would jeopardize American bases in North Africa. Secondly, if Western actions led to Egyptian leanings toward the Soviet Union, "Russian incursions into the Middle East would be a threat to the Southern flank of NATO, could provide a staging area used against Greece and Italy, and be an avenue for aggression against India, Pakistan and Asia."<sup>3</sup> Soviet control of bases in Egypt would neutralize the Western geographic and base advantage in the area and, according to Dulles, "probably result in the loss of allied control of the eastern Mediterranean, the Persian Gulf, and contiguous areas."<sup>4</sup>

The Sixth Fleet moved, but Washington's lack of consideration of contingencies was clearly evident in the Fleet's position. In early July, two patrol force destroyers were withdrawn from the Eastern Mediterranean and, although on July 7 CNO had put the Sixth Fleet on 24-hour alert for possible movement to the Eastern Mediterranean, the situation was considered less volatile by the 11th and the fleet was ordered to return to normal operations -- the alert cancelled. The response to the July 26 crisis was sluggish. The Fleet was augmented. Six destroyer divisions were scheduled to operate in the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean. The Atlantic Barrier Command was extended. Daily intelligence briefings were presented to CINCLANTFLT. The Sixth Fleet was again placed on 24-hour notice. State Department Consular Officers were put on standby as reporting and shipping control officers for the Navy.

Admiral Burke, CNO, told Secretary Dulles that "I would move forces to be ready to fight as crises developed, because I wanted to make the decision early so that the boys knew what the score was, and they would be prepared. Nobody would get caught by surprise. They were all moving. I said 'In order to do that, I'm going to make unscheduled moves with the fleet periodically, so that people will get used to it.' Which I did."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hearings, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. State Department, memo of conversation (Hoover and Courve de Murville, July 27, 1956).

<sup>3</sup> Hearings, p. 31.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Admiral Arleigh Burke, July 3, 1969.

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Two destroyers maintained constant patrol in the Eastern Mediterranean off the coast of Egypt. Meanwhile, Eisenhower's previously planned arms carrying ship was cruising by the Levant.

Washington's official reaction to the Canal seizure was to personally criticize Nasser but play down the importance of his move. The State Department protested his "intemperate, inaccurate, and misleading statements," did not denounce the nationalization as illegal, but merely spoke of "far reaching implications" affecting nations "whose economies depend on the products which move through this international waterway."

The Suez Canal had long been thought of as an Anglo-French private club. Its seizure brought a "spectacular revival of the entente cordiale" between Britain and France. Both felt a direct attack on their world stature, their position in the Near East, their military capabilities and their economic well being.

To the British, the Canal had been a symbol of imperial authority. Defense of Suez had been the reason for the fight to maintain a base in Cyprus. The "arbitrary expropriation by a man regarded as an unpleasant Egyptian upstart evoked the deepest emotions. Among Eden and his ministers clarity of thought gave way to atavistic impulse. Eden applied to the nationalization the emotive word 'theft' and immediately ordered plans to be prepared for the military invasion of Egypt."<sup>1</sup> Eden himself likened Nasser to Hitler -- a new Rhineland was at hand. The Prime Minister's career had been built around his resignation at the failure to act against Hitler. Eden felt his role was to thwart aggression, deny appeasement, and, as he himself stated, "reduce the stature of the megalomaniacal dictator at an early stage."<sup>2</sup> The formal British note of protest called the nationalization an "arbitrary action, which constituted a serious threat to the freedom of navigation on a waterway of vital international importance."

The French note of protest was so violently worded that the Egyptian Ambassador in Paris refused to accept it. The Suez Canal was considered the noble contribution of French civilization and one of its most prized assets. While the Aswan Dam had not involved France, the reprisal for its denial represented a tremendous loss to her.

The whole of France was caught up in the Algerian war. The long history of French defeats, most recently in Indochina, had so infused the French with bitterness and loss of pride that Algeria, a part of metropolitan France, would not be lost. The French were

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<sup>1</sup> Cross, op. cit., p. 318.

<sup>2</sup> Anthony Eden, Full Circle (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1960), p. 480.

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convincing themselves that the Algerian rebels were receiving their supplies and their orders from Cairo. Egypt became the chief enemy and the "Algerian crisis could only be solved via Egypt."

The pervasive French mood can best be expressed by the newspapers of the time: "How dare they attempt to humiliate us!" "Suez is our private property." "If we don't fight Egypt now, it will be too late. Egypt is our mortal enemy, plotting against us." "We will take no more defeats." "We will not be pushed around any more by pipsqueaks."<sup>1</sup> Premier Mollet was telling Ambassadors in Paris that Nasser wanted to "fasten his own control upon the Middle East in order to force his will on Europe."<sup>2</sup>

## Israeli Anxiety

Meanwhile, Ben Gurion in Israel was becoming extremely anxious about Soviet arms in Egypt. He was hurriedly ordering fighters from France and planning a preventive war. The Israeli Premier had just removed Moshe Sharrett, his Foreign Minister, perhaps because Sharrett was opposed to such a strike. Nasser's move did not directly affect Israel, because her ships had been denied passage through the Canal even under Anglo-French ownership. In fact, Nasser made the conciliatory gesture of allowing Israel-bound ships to go through the Canal beginning August 4. But nationalization was a jolt to the Israelis because it represented the kind of rallying point around which a gain in Arab solidarity could evolve into a coordinated military threat. Ben Gurion intensified his efforts to win over or quiet the opponents to war.

## THE IMMEDIATE REACTION

Prime Minister Eden was dining at 10 Downing Street with the King of Iraq and Nuri al Said when news of the nationalization reached him. Eden immediately called a meeting of the Cabinet and military leaders. The American Charge d'Affaire, Andrew Foster, and CINCNELM were invited to the midnight session. Foster cabled the State Department: "Cabinet agreed that recourse to UN Security Council ran too great a risk of matter becoming 'hopelessly bogged down.' Regardless of international legal aspects, interested Western governments must consider possible economic, political, and military measures against Egypt to ensure maintenance Canal, freedom of transit through it, and reasonable tolls.... Cabinet decided to have chiefs alert British commanders in Mediterranean to

<sup>1</sup> Herbert Luethy and David Rednick, French Motivations in the Suez Crisis (Institute for International Social Research, November, 1956), p. 63, 99, 100.

<sup>2</sup> Love, op. cit., p. 145.

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situation. Chiefs were instructed to produce soonest a study of what forces would be required to seize Canal and how they would be disposed if military action became necessary... only solution lay in a western consortium taking over and operating the Canal, establishing itself if need be by military force."<sup>1</sup>

## British- French Military Planning Begins

The integrated command for a joint military venture in the Mediterranean was appointed. The operation was to be led by a British Supreme Commander with a French deputy; under them a British Admiral with a French Admiral as his deputy. Rumor had it that Lord Mountbatten was asked to be the Commander, but refused. The job went to Sir Charles Keightley who shuttled as Commander-in-Chief between Cyprus and the planning coordination room underneath the Thames. His deputy was General Beaufre, a little-known Frenchman who spoke English fluently and was equally brilliant in diplomacy and military operations. His deputy was Admiral Barjot, Commander of the French Mediterranean Fleet -- a prolific writer with great imagination. Sir Charles, following English military tradition, left the task of planning the entire operation to his operational commander, Lieutenant-General Sir Hugh Stockwell.

French and British military chiefs began to make an inventory of military resources available for immediate action. The inventory was disappointing. "Unless the action could have been carried through exclusively by airborne troops, there was no alternative to an expedition from Malta. Unless we could fly all the forces needed, they had to swim. The nearest place from which to swim was Malta, a thousand miles away. Cyprus has no sufficient harbor for landing craft or transports. There is no escape from these logistics. We had nothing like enough airborne troops for an operation of this kind. The French had more, but together we could not have mustered a full division with artillery support. The follow-up would have taken several weeks to organize, even with the most brilliant improvisation."<sup>2</sup> The British chiefs of staff reported that without U.S. Sixth Fleet or other aid, an Anglo-French military force could not be mounted for at least six weeks. September 15 was selected as the first possible date for invasion. The plan was to entail occupation of much of Egypt after a landing at Port Said.<sup>3</sup>

The British treasury blocked all Egyptian accounts. The Navy cancelled all leaves. Arms exports to Egypt were halted. Eden announced troop movements. The Admiralty announced that "certain naval moves had been ordered" in case of serious trouble in the

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<sup>1</sup> Love, op. cit., p. 355 (taken from Eisenhower Papers).

<sup>2</sup> Eden, op. cit., p. 479.

<sup>3</sup> Hugh Thomas, Suez (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 55.



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eastern Mediterranean. A British cruiser broke off its courtesy call at Alexandria. Warships in three British home ports were put on a state of alert. Troop ships were rerouted around the Cape of Good Hope.

It was reported in Paris that the French Government favored military action at Suez. The French Navy put their Mediterranean fleet on a war footing and its ships began to collect at Toulon in readiness for an operation at "an undisclosed location." Preliminary military studies worried Pineau because they indicated Egypt was surprisingly strong with a good bomber force. He demanded Dulles approve a diversion of two or more Mystere IV squadrons from NATO to Israel. Mollet blamed the United States for its own weakness and inability to strike more quickly: "France as a loyal NATO ally had carried out NATO directives to build only fighter aircraft, leaving heavy bombers to the United States and Britain."<sup>1</sup>

Robert Murphy recalled, "I was left in no doubt that the British Government believed that Suez was a test which could be met only by the use of force. . . . The British did not like the risk and expense involved -- the government had set aside five million pounds for the venture -- but 'Nasser has to be chased out of Egypt.' The scheme provided for a strike at the Egyptian air force by bombers from Cyprus, Malta, Aden, and fleet carriers. The objective was to paralyze the Egyptians, knock out Cairo radio, and 'chase Nasser from Egypt' while preventing the blockage of the Canal."<sup>2</sup> Neither Eden nor Pineau would allow negotiations to delay military preparation.

## U. S. Resistance to Military Measures

President Eisenhower met with Allen Dulles, Andrew Goodpaster and Herbert Hoover, Jr. Foster Dulles was in Peru. Eisenhower said "We must look upon this as an absolute violation of a treaty."<sup>3</sup> The Secretary of State urged the need for "common sense and judgment." This crisis was fundamentally a legal problem and demanded legal action. Dulles was anxious to have Nasser reverse the nationalization and have the Canal internationalized with a reaffirmation of the Convention of 1888 governing use of the waterway. Washington felt compromised by its ownership of the Panama Canal. Dulles kept re-emphasizing America's special treaty rights with Panama. He wanted neither condonement of Egypt's seizure nor recourse to the United Nations to create a precedent for either nationalization or international interference in Panama.

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<sup>1</sup> John Robinson Beal, John Foster Dulles (New York, 1957), p. 288.

<sup>2</sup> Love, op. cit., p. 374.

<sup>3</sup> Eisenhower, Dulles Oral History, p. 31.

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Eden and Mollet were convinced, and Dulles agreed, that the Egyptians simply could not run the Canal. They had neither the trained pilots, nor the financial acumen. The leaders were so convinced of this that they failed to see it was not the case. According to some officials "technically and juridically, the nationalization was impeccable.... There was nothing to do except twiddle our thumbs."<sup>1</sup> In fact, the maintenance and efficiency of operations were astoundingly good. Traffic went through at a greater pace than the year before.

The Egyptian President went to great lengths to assure the world that the Canal was an open, efficient waterway run entirely in accordance with international law. Whereas all Israeli shipping had been barred from use of the Canal prior to nationalization, Egypt announced that she would not bar non-strategic Israel-bound goods. The position was reaffirmed when the formerly blacklisted Dutch ship SS Fedala was allowed to pass through the Suez Canal carrying goods from Haifa to Massawa on August 4th.<sup>2</sup>

On July 28, Robert Murphy flew to London to talk with Eden and Pineau. Dulles felt his own presence would suggest U.S. involvement. Murphy found himself at odds with Pineau, who accused him of a leak to the press, and with both European leaders over his lack of instructions and inability to state U.S. positions or contributions. The French and the British were getting more aggressive and persistently attacked Americans for their naivete and Dulles for his refusal to go to London. Murphy sent messages to Washington informing Eisenhower that the decision to employ force without delay was getting firmer. He felt the British and French thought the U.S. would be behind them, if not in the military venture at least by lack of opposition and ability to "take care of the Bear."<sup>3</sup> Eisenhower immediately dispatched Dulles to London.

Dulles thought Nasser would be more impressed with a show of international unity against his venture than with threats. Eden and Mollet were of the opinion that an international conference would organize world opinion behind them and therefore make it more acceptable for them to intervene militarily. Whether Dulles countenanced the use of force at that time has been endlessly questioned. The available evidence leads to the conclusion that he put himself in the position of committing the United States to backing the use of force if the conference method proved fruitless: "Force was the last method to be tried, but the United States did not exclude the use of force if all other methods failed."<sup>4</sup> It was necessary, however, to get Congressional backing and that would depend

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<sup>1</sup> Love, op. cit., p. 363.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. State Department, #3021 from Port Said (August 4, 1956).

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Robert Murphy (November 12, 1969).

<sup>4</sup> Eden, op. cit., p. 487.

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on the garnering of public appreciation that peaceful efforts had failed. Dulles himself wrote, "This divergence of initial approach between us and the British and French does not by any means imply that we will not be solidly with them if the conference method breaks down. . . . The U.S. has become inevitably involved when the chips are down."<sup>1</sup> Admiral Radford disclosed that "the JCS had made planning studies with the British that covered the taking of various types of action jointly, down there. We'd brushed these plans up that summer -- talked with the British -- so we knew what they had in mind."<sup>2</sup>

## British-French Military Planning Proceeds

Although Eden and Mollet agreed to the pursuit of the conference method and private negotiations, they continued to play up the military threat: The British Government announced a state of emergency and called up reserves; the Royal Navy and Air Force ordered sea and air units to the Middle East; three carriers were ordered to the Mediterranean -- two sailed before August 7, carrying troops and landing equipment; France agreed to deliver aircraft and weapons to Israel; the French fleet assembled at Toulon comprising two carriers, a battleship, a cruiser, twenty-one destroyers and six submarines.<sup>3</sup>

Joint Anglo-French military planning began on August 7, and by August 12 a tentative invasion plan was ready. According to British testimony, it called for "preliminary air strikes against Egyptian airfields followed by paratroop drops and seaborne landings. Britain would supply fifty thousand troops, France thirty thousand; Canberra jet bombers would be covered by British naval aircraft and the French Air Force; an Anglo-French combined fleet would protect the landings and provide the sea bombardment. The entire force would gather, rehearsed and equipped, at Malta and Cyprus by September 15."<sup>4</sup>

With the assembling of commandos in Malta, the beginnings of the evacuation of Egypt by the British, and the formation of an army of national liberation by Egypt, the Sixth Fleet moved to within 48 hours steaming distance of Suez, but unexplainably cancelled its 24-hour alert.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. State Department, #144 to Moscow (August 4, 1956).

<sup>2</sup> Arthur W. Radford, Dulles Oral History (Princeton University, 1965), p. 78.

<sup>3</sup> Erskine Childers, The Road to Suez (London: McGibbon and Kee, 1962), p. 209.

<sup>4</sup> Terrence Robertson, Crisis: The Inside Story of the Suez Conspiracy (New York: Atheneum, 1965), p. 77.

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## THE ORGANIZATION OF INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE

During the months of August and September Eden and Dulles found some common ground in their proposals, but both had a private face different from their public ones and both completely misunderstood the other's intentions. Eden was convinced that the U.S. would support -- if not participate in -- an attack on Egypt. He therefore was willing to go with Dulles down the path of international conferences and the U.N., because he needed the time to mount a military venture, and because he hoped to organize international opinion behind the move.

### Movement Toward a Conference

Dulles, on the other hand, wished to keep the threat of force alive in order to "persuade" Nasser, but wanted to avoid having to be involved in what he considered a colonialist venture, especially just before an American Presidential election. To Dulles, therefore, the conference method was an effort to cool down his Anglo-French colleagues and to avoid using force before garnering world opinion and American public support.

Dulles was caught in a dilemma. He was not fond of Nasser and would probably have backed use of force if it had been done as a reprisal move right after the nationalization, but the British and French could not have mounted an attack without Sixth Fleet support for at least six weeks. Chief of Naval Operations Arleigh Burke agreed with the British on the necessity of an attack to remove Nasser. However, any motive other than retrieval of the Canal was to Dulles too close an association with the remnants of imperialism. Also, perhaps a way could be found to peacefully internationalize the Canal. If the British and French had gone in right away, Eisenhower would not have opposed the move and may have given Sixth Fleet support.<sup>1</sup> But two things prevented an early attack: first, the British and French greatly overestimated Egyptian military power and, second, Dulles convinced Eden and Mollet that they must "mobilize world opinion in favor of international operation of the Canal.... A way had to be found to make Nasser disgorge what he was attempting to swallow.... It should be possible to create a world opinion so adverse to Nasser that he would be isolated. Then if a military operation had to be undertaken it would be more apt to succeed."<sup>2</sup> In any event, Washington assured London and Paris of an "atomic umbrella" against attack by the Soviet Union.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Eisenhower, Dulles Oral History, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Eden, op. cit., p. 487.

<sup>3</sup> Merry and Serge Bromberger, Secrets of Suez (London: Pan Books, 1957), p. 47.

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A mutual distrust and personal animosity between Dulles and Eden developed. Dulles constantly felt he was being misled and used and made every effort to publicly disavow what he had earlier privately intimated. Eden had a faulty bile duct, an illness which made him prone to fits of anger -- he was infuriated by what he thought were Dulles' hypocrisy and desire to capitalize on British problems in the Near East. This coupled with Dulles' dislike of Pineau's arrogance, an American ambassador in London who was unsympathetic to his Secretary of State, and an American Ambassador to the U.N. who preferred to make his own decisions led James Reston to remark, "There has seldom been a period in modern history when personality has played so large a part in so many unhappy world events."<sup>1</sup>

Dulles, Eden and Pineau decided to convene a conference in London in order to work out a plan for and endorse internationalization of the Suez Canal. Eden wanted neither Russia nor Egypt at the conference, but Dulles felt that their exclusion would make the effort look like a rubber stamp of a previously made tripartite decision. He also felt that in order to avoid trouble with the Panama Canal, Suez must be treated strictly on the legal basis of the 1888 Convention and that meant inviting all signatories. However, the U.S. had not been a signatory and so the conference expanded to include the sixteen principal users of the Suez Canal. The invitations went out from London on August 2.

To Dulles' mind "should Nasser refuse to attend or accept reasonable proposals, there would be a broader base for other actions, free of the imputation (however false in fact) that the United States was backing France and Britain for purposes not directly connected with the Canal."<sup>2</sup>

Dulles arrived in London on August 15. He met that evening with Foreign Minister Shepilov, who was leading the Russian delegation. The Soviets had objected to the conference as biased and illegal, but came to protect Egypt's sovereign rights. Shepilov was very disturbed over Anglo-French military moves. He was prepared to make a great many concessions in order to stabilize the Suez situation. Dulles admitted to having liked him. He reported to Eisenhower, "I feel that the Soviets would be open to making some kind of an arrangement with us and perhaps join to impose it upon Egypt if, on the one hand, it were couched in a way which would not gravely prejudice the Soviet Union with the Arab world and if, on the other hand, we would more or less make it a two-party affair with some downgrading of the British and the French. I doubt whether Soviet agreement is worth having at that price but I shall do everything possible short of

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<sup>1</sup> Herbert G. Nicholas, Britain and the U. S. A. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1963), p. 117.

<sup>2</sup> U. S. State Department, #NIACT 144 to Moscow (August 4, 1956).

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disloyalty to the British and the French to get Soviet agreement."<sup>1</sup> Two other highly credible sources reported that Shepilov promised in return for an Anglo-French commitment not to use force, "Moscow would... pull the rug out from under Nasser and might even... agree to the neutralization of the whole Middle East."<sup>2</sup> But, after a second meeting with Dulles, the Soviet Foreign Minister's position hardened.

Thereafter, the Soviets made several efforts to disrupt the conference. Eden wrote Eisenhower of intelligence which the British received from Shepilov's meetings in London: "I have no doubt that the Bear is using Nasser, with or without his knowledge, to further his immediate aims. These are, I think, first to dislodge the West from the Middle East, and second to get a foothold in Africa so as to dominate that continent in turn... the Soviets... want to see the abolition of all foreign bases and exploitation."<sup>3</sup>

The London Conference met at Lancaster House on August 16 and ended on August 23. The tripartite conclusions had been outlined by Dulles on the first day and were adopted by the majority on the last. The draft declaration proposed an internationalized Canal, assured Egypt a fair return, and called for the negotiation of a new convention. Eighteen nations signed the declaration. The Soviet Union led the dissenters pointing out that Egypt's sovereign rights were not acknowledged. Eden, knowing Nasser, could expect the plan to be flatly rejected by Egypt. The proposal was presented to Nasser by Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies. Nasser rejected it.

## Military Preparations Continue

On August 24, "The day Dulles departed London for home, General Stockwell completed his plan for Operation Musketeer, General André Beaufre was shifted from his Algerian command to become Stockwell's deputy, and Stockwell began a tour of units in Algeria, Cyprus, and Malta assigned to the invasion force."<sup>4</sup> The British were to lead the operation for various reasons: they governed Cyprus, they had long-range bombers, they knew Egypt, and they were better able to win over the Americans.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Love, op. cit., p. 392.

<sup>2</sup> Edmond Taylor, "Our Diplomatic Defeats and the Unity of Europe," The Reporter (October 18, 1956), p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Eden, op. cit., p. 505.

<sup>4</sup> Eden, op. cit., p. 505.

<sup>5</sup> Love, op. cit., p. 392.

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Operation Musketeer called for an assault landing at Alexandria supported by air attacks and an advance to Cairo through the desert. The time-table was as follows:<sup>1</sup>

- 31 August - call up reservists
- 2 September - decision in principle to launch the operation
- 3 September - British transports leave England
- 5-6 September - concentration of naval forces in Malta. Signals and landing exercises
- 8 September - French parachute troops leave for Cyprus
- 10 September - final decision on date of landing
- 11 September - French transports leave Algiers
- 15 September - start of air action
- 17 September - landing.

Alexandria had many advantages: it was the only modern port capable of handling such a fleet; it afforded a quick foothold in Egypt; and it provided a more secure route to Cairo than did Port Said. Alexandria also had several drawbacks: the Delta could be used as a guerilla base; a forced crossing of the Nile would be difficult, the secondary beach landing was dangerous because of submerged reefs; the possible presence of Sixth Fleet ships anchored next to Egyptian ones would provide a risk of incidents.<sup>2</sup>

By September 4, the attack was postponed from September 15 to September 25 or 26, probably because Eden had decided, according to Nutting, to first "go through the U. N. hoop" if Robert Menzies failed to get Nasser's approval of the London agreement. General Stockwell wrote later "we were ready by September 8th" to go in on the 15th.<sup>3</sup> Also, Alexandria was abandoned in favor of an attack on Port Said. This decision was to postpone the landing even more as all the plans had to be revised. Port Said would require more landing ships and aircraft -- which were not available. The French were short of LST's, the British of LCT's. The roads inland were perfect for an Egyptian ambush. There would be a shortage of water.

<sup>1</sup> Brombergers, op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 35, 59.

<sup>3</sup> Love, op. cit., p. 424.

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Admiral Arleigh Burke was aware that the British did not have the landing craft and the Sixth Fleet did. He told Dulles "For God's sake, let's give them the craft -- give them ours. They're over there. They've got to make this thing successful."<sup>1</sup> According to Burke, Dulles replied that he could not do it. However, the U. S. did furnish spare parts for French planes. American forces in France furnished the British and French with new anti-tank guns. The new U2 reconnaissance aircraft photographed the Near East and throughout the entire crisis furnished the British with photographs of Egypt.<sup>2</sup>

The State Department had already begun to institute emergency precautions in the Near East. By August 4, U. S. Embassy, Cairo, was on 24-hour alert, had begun running communications tests with Alexandria, and awaited a technician for installation of a transmitter at Port Said. On August 18, CNO had requested "that particular attention be devoted to developments and intelligence related to the problem to include, in addition to the usual reports, status boards and plots on the strength and disposition of the armed forces concerned (including those of Great Britain and France)."<sup>3</sup>

The tension was building slowly. Franco-British troops arrived in Cyprus and Malta. Syria mobilized. The French were further arming Israel.

Egyptian General Amer announced that the Army was ready to repel an attack. The second battalion, U. S. Marines, had its tour in the Mediterranean extended.

On August 6, Nasser had begun to withdraw half of Egypt's 60,000 man garrison in Sinai. Two full divisions and an armoured brigade were pulled back to defend Cairo, its approaches, and the Canal. This presented Israel with a unique opportunity.

Ben Gurion asked the French for increased arms supplies, and on August 7 a secret accord was concluded. The Israelis coupled their pretexts for attack with censure of the U. S. The American Ambassador inferred the Israeli view was: "If Nasser gets away with this he would become much more powerful and prestigious. This would pose a great threat to Israel. The U. S. is trying to prevent France and the U. K. from trying to reclaim their property from Egypt by force. Will she move a finger if Egypt attacks Israel?"<sup>4</sup> Ben Gurion then decided to intervene by a preventive attack scheduled for early November when the U. S. would be involved in elections.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Burke interview (July 3, 1969).

<sup>2</sup> Thomas, op. cit., p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> U. S. Navy, memo from CNO to Director, Naval Intelligence (August 18, 1956).

<sup>4</sup> U. S. State Department, #90 from Tel Aviv (August 16, 1956).

<sup>5</sup> Eisenhower, Dulles Oral History.

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Assuming the certainty of failure of the Menzies mission, Eden and Mollet began to plan their next moves. "The question" as Eden saw it, "was how long we could pursue diplomatic methods and economic sanctions, which very likely would not succeed, before the possibility of military action slipped from our grasp."<sup>1</sup> The British wanted to refer the issue to the Security Council and to exert financial pressure upon Egypt. Dulles was opposed to both.

## A New Dulles Plan

Eden and Mollet decided on September 10 to establish a pretext and go on with the invasion as planned. The pretext would be Nasser's inability to run the Canal. The proof would be the paralysis resulting from a recall of the Suez Canal Company's pilots. The walkout was scheduled for September 14/15, and the invasion force was to begin moving on the 15th. The plan was changed to direct paratroop action, and, as Pineau said, "We get the Canal; Nasser goes. Why waste time on a protracted campaign to capture Alexandria and Cairo first?"<sup>2</sup> But the meeting was interrupted by a phone call from Dulles and an excited explanation of his newest proposal.

The Secretary of State had spent the weekend trying to think of a way to keep Britain and France from either going to the U.N. or following the September invasion plan. Dulles worked out a program whereby the users of the Canal would ban together, hire pilots, manage the Canal, collect the dues, and use the convention as an instrument of power to force Egyptian compliance. Those who worked with Dulles later acknowledged that he did not firmly believe in the Suez Canal Users Association (SCUA), that it was not well thought through, and that to Dulles it was merely another stalling device.

It was probably the week following the September 10 decision for SCUA that Dulles became inwardly as well as outwardly opposed to the use of force. At the beginning of the week "even force he did not rule out as an ultimate resort, and once more he recognized [the Anglo-French] right to maintain the threat of using it."<sup>3</sup> But many points came to Dulles' attention in the following three days. The Afro-Asians were gaining sympathy for Nasser and lumping the U.S. in with "colonialists" -- a characterization which was abhorrent to Dulles. Italy was hinting at opposition to any armed intervention. A growing group of nations (India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Ceylon, etc.) was accusing the French and British of sabre-rattling. In short, the international support which Dulles had counted on was not materializing. His own changes in position and frail schemes

<sup>1</sup> Eden, op. cit., p. 507.

<sup>2</sup> Christian Pineau, Dulles Oral History (Princeton University).

<sup>3</sup> Kirk, op. cit., p. 69.

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were only adding to the strength of Nasser's position. Eisenhower saw that the U.S. electorate would now not support force and in the face of a presidential election demanded that Dulles use sobering arguments with America's allies. To these points an economic argument was added. An American task force had discovered that Europe's petroleum needs could be filled at not too great an expense without the Suez Canal and to Dulles this meant "the Anglo-French argument that they could not permit their economic survival to be at the mercy of Nasser was no longer a valid excuse."<sup>1</sup> Dulles was changing his mind, and his attitude became more hardened by the widening of the personal gulf between him and Eden.

Eden had turned to Eisenhower and written a lengthy letter describing Nasser's Hitler-like ambitions, his intention to take over all Near East oil supplies as well as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria and Iraq, and his submission to Soviet influence. Eisenhower was deeply disturbed by this emotionalism and cabled Eden that this was a "picture too dark and... severely distorted."<sup>2</sup> On September 11 the President went so far as to imply that France and Britain were the aggressors and that the U.S. "would not be a party to aggression."<sup>3</sup>

## Israel Breaks the Ice

On the day Dulles announced SCUA (September 12), Israel mounted a major raid into Jordan and Anthony Eden told his Generals to postpone their military venture to October 1. Moshe Dayan speeded up Israeli pilot training to keep pace with the arrivals of French Mystere IVs. The British and French military leaders again revised Plan Musketeer. They began trying to overcome the difficulties presented by lack of landing craft. Port Said was to be taken by the landing of tanks from LSTs and a forced entry. This posed risks of ship losses by gunfire and serious damage to the port. An attempt was made to "circumvent the necessity for an opposed landing." Air operations were to be extended until the Egyptian will to fight was broken, life was paralyzed, and the government incapacitated. A targeting committee was formed. The plan was set for the stationing of the amphibious fleet in Cyprus with personnel to be brought there as air action began and thereafter the landing operation would be launched from Cyprus and backed by ships moving from Malta and Algeria. The new landing date was set for October 8. The series of postponements was taking its toll on the morale of waiting troops.

Washington was showing scattered signs of nervousness. Phase I evacuation alert was instituted in Egypt, Jordan, and Syria -- evacuation would be made with only the use of commercial transport. The Seventh Fleet was alerted for reinforcement of CINCNELM

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<sup>1</sup>Robertson, op. cit., p. 112.

<sup>2</sup>Love, op. cit., p. 419.

<sup>3</sup>Robertson, op. cit., p. 118.

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forces "in the event of increased tension or emergency in that area." The Marine Air-Ground Task Force in Izmir, Turkey, began upgrading their requirements for support of CINCSPECOMME OP Plan 215-56, which provided for unilateral action in the Near East in the event of Arab-Israeli hostilities. An airborne regimental combat team and service support units were alerted in Europe. Several U. S. Air Force planes were temporarily stationed in Adana, Turkey.<sup>1</sup>

The U. S. Embassy in Paris reported that agreement between Eden, Lloyd, Mollet, and Pineau had been reached that "military action would not be resorted to unless a) traffic through the Canal was almost totally interrupted and b) there were serious riots or other similar actions in Egypt which would convince British public opinion of the necessity for military action. It was decided that both France and Britain would maintain their military forces in the Eastern Mediterranean."<sup>2</sup> Whether or not Washington was being misled is questionable. However, the State Department took the pledge at face value, and it became one of the last confidences of military intention. The gulf widened.

Dulles was becoming more and more alienated from Eden and Mollet. He noted on September 19, "my general impression is that the British and the French have quite isolated themselves even from what are naturally their closest friends."<sup>3</sup> Whereupon, by September 19, the Secretary of State vowed disassociation and began to thwart Franco-British moves.

The French reacted very strongly to Dulles' attacks. Mollet introduced what in retrospect was extremely interesting and important blackmail. France thought the United States was "leaning toward the idea of Fortress America" and away from Europe. Mollet transmitted a message to Dulles through Ambassador Dillon in Paris: "The Russians... were prepared, jointly with Nasser, to bring peace in Algeria on French terms provided that France cooperated with the Soviet Union in Europe. Moscow did not ask that Paris leave NATO, but only that France be less faithful to the United States and Britain -- becoming semineutralist."<sup>4</sup> Washington was warned that this was extremely hard for any French leader to turn down as the promise of peace in Algeria was the most important and most pressing goal of all French leaders. Dillon added, "since Nasser's seizure of the Canal, there have been periods when U. S. policy was applauded and periods when our policy was

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<sup>1</sup> U. S. State Department, Memo of Conversation (Admiral Herbert Riley and Fraser Wilkins, September 24, 1956).

<sup>2</sup> U. S. State Department, #1485 from Paris (September 27, 1956).

<sup>3</sup> U. S. State Department, John Foster Dulles #2 from London (September 19, 1956).

<sup>4</sup> Gerson, op. cit., p. 288.

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suspect. However, there has thus far been no final determination re U.S. . . . . French now feel U.S. have let France down. Serious problems in Franco-American relations will be posed. Whether French will react with attacks on NATO and overall alliance with U.S. uncertain but this is a possibility. Mood is one of great frustration multiplied by exasperation with division British opinion. There may well be rather nasty period ahead."<sup>1</sup>

One of the significant aspects of the Suez Crisis is that whereas there were great divergencies at the summit, the three NATO allies worked closely among the intelligence services. Close ties were established between the intelligence officers in London and Paris which enabled Washington to remain relatively well informed about Franco-British moves.

Admiral Radford later admitted that these channels had "brought word of French direct support of Israel -- they were supplying Israel with equipment of various kinds and particularly sending them jet fighters. Doing this latter, they were violating an agreement with us because we had financed the building of those fighters for French NATO use only. . . . We had all this dope. The French were lying to us, just baldly."<sup>2</sup>

France and Israel were growing ever closer and their representatives began coordinating a military venture wherein Israel would attack Egypt during the U.S. presidential elections and France would support the move. The British felt they could not make a move which was visibly connected with Israel. The Israelis wanted Franco-British support only after they had taken Sinai and won an Israeli victory.

## The Soviet Factor

On September 14, Ambassador Bohlen in Moscow cabled Washington about Soviet moves and intentions. Bulganin had sent Mollet a threatening and insulting letter. The letter warned of dire consequences from the use of forces (such as those in Algeria) to intimidate or subdue Egypt. Paris did not take the warning any more seriously than all of Moscow's usual invectives. Bohlen thought the French had overdiagrammed the sentence structure and missed the message. He pointed out that "France while the weakest link in the Western chain is therefore the primary target. . . [and] is underestimating the seriousness of the Soviet attitude on Suez. They will support Egypt 1) morally and diplomatically, 2) with arms, and 3) covertly -- perhaps sending volunteers."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. State Department, #1387 from Paris (September 24, 1956).

<sup>2</sup> Radford, Dulles Oral History, p. 76.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. State Department, #273 (September 30, 1956) from New York.

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Four weeks later, the French general staff began an analysis of political risks and the possibility of intervention by the Soviet Union and also by the United States. General Beaufre wrote of the "appreciation": "In the event of direct intervention by the United States... we might have to face diplomatic action with UNO support; at the worst this might go as far as military action in the form of a blockade (I was thinking of the Sixth Fleet). In the event of intervention by the USSR, we should certainly be met by a political counter-offensive throughout the Near East, perhaps by submarine blockade (supposedly Egyptian) and more or less direct air intervention. At the worst the USSR might intervene directly herself, accepting the risk of world conflict... We must have available the necessary offensive resources to... crush all resistance rapidly. Our sole chance lies in achieving a fait accompli."<sup>1</sup>

## Negotiations Fail

On September 19-21 the eighteen powers again met at Lancaster House -- this time to draw up plans for SCUA. The Second London Conference turned out to be a bitter disappointment to Eden and Pineau; both had hoped it would give SCUA teeth and force a convoy through the Canal. Dulles turned it into a much more peaceful and conciliatory group. After Dulles left for London Airport, Pineau went to see Eden at 10 Downing Street "where their bitterness boiled over." The two decided to take the crisis to the U.N. Security Council -- a move which Dulles had vehemently opposed. Eden said, "Dulles will be furious!" The prime minister sent a telegram to Washington to inform the Secretary of the decision before the press did, but Dulles had stopped off in Bermuda for a swim. He had been thwarted and was indeed furious.

The State Department had been against referral to the Security Council for several reasons. A Russian veto was inevitable. Dulles thought that going to the U. N. was just a "device for obtaining cover" to use force. If any resolution were put forward banning the use of force, the United States would not join in an Anglo-French veto.

The United Nations slowly and grudgingly began preparing to discuss the Suez question. Both Egypt and the Franco-British 'alliance' put forth a resolution. After two weeks of getting organized, on October 5 the Security Council began hearings on Suez, the day Eden collapsed in exhaustion and went into the hospital. Egyptian representative Fawzi dismissed all Anglo-French proposals. Finally, on October 12 secret Anglo-French-Egyptian talks with Hammarskjold produced six working principles which were agreed upon. President Eisenhower announced, "it looks like here is a very great crisis that is behind us." The next day, the Soviet Union vetoed the Anglo-French resolution, the secret talks were abandoned, and Eden declared "force is the last resort and it cannot

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<sup>1</sup> Andre Beaufre, The Suez Expedition: 1956 (New York: Praeger, 1967), p. 73.



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be excluded...peace at any price means to increase step by step the dangers of universal war." Pineau said there was "no basis for negotiations" and Lloyd added, "we have done all we can." Eden later wrote that "beaming through rose-coloured glasses [the Americans] acclaimed the six principles" but these "just flapped in the air."<sup>1</sup>

## THE DISINTEGRATION OF PEACE IN THE NEAR EAST

On October 12, French and Israeli military leaders met in Paris to plan a coordinated attack on Egypt. The Israelis had been planning to attack either Jordan or Egypt and began making requests of the French for equipment. Moshe Dayan had secretly gone to Paris on October 1 after the Israeli decision to attack Egypt had been made. There Dayan made a request for 100 tanks, 300 half-tracks, 1,000 bazooka rocket launchers and a squadron of transport planes.<sup>2</sup> The next day Dayan alerted his General Staff to prepare for the conquest of Sinai.

### Israel Moves

On October 5, the Israeli military completed their final plan for the invasion -- Operation Kadesh. They then cultivated a crisis with Jordan as a diversion. Israel withdrew from the Jordan-Israel Mixed Armistice Commission on 3 October and on October 5 began to prohibit UN Military Observers from investigating incidents on Israeli territory.

The Jordan cover plan was to leave the impression that if Israel attacked anywhere, it would be into Jordan. The plan worked -- on Dulles as well as Eden. Several massive reprisal raids were launched. These were climaxed by the most massive raid since the Palestine War, the killing of 48 Jordanians in Qalqilya on October 10. The Anglo-Jordanian treaty almost went into effect and the RAF were alerted. Eden sternly admonished Ben Gurion not to strike Jordan again. A conflict was barely averted in which Israel and France would be aligned against the strange entente of Jordan, Russia, Britain and Egypt.

King Hussein was nervous about a full-scale Israeli invasion, the popularity of Nasser in election-bound Jordan, and the stability of his own regime. Eden and Nuri al Said seized upon this issue with a recommendation that Iraq send troops into Jordan both to support the Army and to prevent an election swing toward Nasser on October 21. Both the U. S. and Israel were consulted and approved the Eden-Nuri plan.

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<sup>1</sup> Eden, op. cit., p. 563.

<sup>2</sup> Love, op. cit., p. 442.

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Then, quite suddenly, Ben Gurion changed his mind and withdrew his approval of the Iraqi troop movement. "Israel was quite prepared to forgo or postpone the war against Nasser and, instead, take Western Jordan and Jerusalem if Iraqi troops entered the country."<sup>1</sup> Dulles declared that as "Iraqi troops served the basic interests of the U. S. [in that] it was preferable to permitting Egypt or the Soviet Bloc to gain influence." He admonished Israeli Ambassador Eban, saying, "it is difficult to see how the fundamentals have changed unless Israel desires the fragmentation of Jordan and its annexation."<sup>2</sup> But Eden capitulated and asked Nuri not to send the troops in.

## British- French- Israeli Collusion

The Israelis began to take the French into their confidence about the planned attack on Egypt. The French were delighted to be of any assistance, and, to the Israelis, French military aid was essential -- Israel needed naval cover and destruction of the Egyptian Air Force and France promised both.

The plan was to follow a three-day mobilization with a blitz attack followed by a return to Israel for expected attacks by Jordan and Syria. The French were needed both militarily and politically, because they could neutralize Britain and prevent her (and possibly Jordan's) intervention against Israel. Meanwhile the French were to invade Egypt at Port Said.

It occurred to French Defense Minister Bourges-Maunoury on October 12 that any Israeli invasion would endanger the Canal and therefore both the French and the British would have a ready-made excuse to "separate the combatants." Mollet called Whitehall on the 13th and sent General Challe to London the next day to explain the plan. According to British Colonial Secretary Nutting, Challe outlined the planned Israeli attack and the French proposition that a Franco-British force enter Egypt claiming "to be separating the combatants and extinguishing a dangerous fire, while actually seizing control of the entire waterway."<sup>3</sup>

On October 16, Eden and Lloyd flew to Paris where, after five hours, the joint intervention was agreed upon.

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<sup>1</sup> Love, op. cit., p. 449.

<sup>2</sup> U. S. State Department, memo of conversation (Eban, Dulles, October 15, 1956).

<sup>3</sup> Anthony Nutting, No End of a Lesson: The Story of Suez (London: Constable, 1967), p. 91.

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Thereafter, Eden refused to acknowledge that Britain was allied with Israel. He never wanted to "dirty his hands" by making any direct arrangements with the Israelis, so the French did all the coordination and informed Eden. Eden's hostility toward the Israelis nearly caused the collusion to break up several times. He has never admitted and only implied by omission any knowledge of or connection with the Israeli move. Militarily, the venture suffered tremendously from this "idee fixe" of the British Prime Minister.

It was this day, October 16, that the strange conspiracy of silence began between the Atlantic partners. From that moment until the outbreak of war, the French and British completely cut off Washington at all levels from the routine exchanges of information. There was no British Ambassador in Washington from October 11 until November 8. Dulles' biographer notes: "There was a blackout of news, disturbing to official Washington." Ambassador Dillon in Paris called it "a clam-up." Eisenhower remembered "all communications just ceased between us on the one hand, and the French and British on the other. But we, our intelligence people, were watching, and we could see what was coming up in Israel. But we didn't know what was going to be the target or the timing... And so we kept on the watch, and were not caught completely off guard. But the fact was that we didn't know what the British and French were going to do. We kept constant surveillance over the Israeli mobilization. We couldn't figure out exactly what was going to happen."<sup>1</sup>

The U-2 flights showed then that the Washington-approved 12 Mystere IV jets to be supplied by France to Israel had multiplied to sixty. Eisenhower received this information and intelligence about Israel's proposed mobilization on October 15. His Memorandum for the Record indicated the success of the Jordan Diversion: "'Ben Gurion's obviously aggressive attitude' is aimed at hastening the disintegration of Jordan so that Israel could 'occupy and lay claim to a goodly portion of the area of that nation' while the ... Administration's hands were tied by the electoral campaign."<sup>2</sup>

Eisenhower recalled telling Eban "you go out and tell Ben Gurion if any of his moves are being made because he thinks we will in effect have to support him just because we're going to have an election, you tell him first, that I don't give a damn whether I'm re-elected, and secondly, that we're going to do exactly what we've been saying [keep the peace], and that's that."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Eisenhower, Dulles Oral History, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Love, op. cit., p. 454.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 454.

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The military plans for the joint attack were thrown into confusion because of Eden's refusal to make any preparations before the Israeli offensive. The British invasion fleet could not arrive until thirteen days after Israel's move owing to the slow speed of the minesweepers and landing craft. Finally, two days were gained by having the British armada involved in a "routine" exercise when the Israelis attacked. The Cyprus base was considered incapable of handling the expeditionary force and the main body would have to move in from Malta. In Algeria, the French began loading under cover of amphibious exercises. Warships left Toulon ostensibly for Bizerte.<sup>1</sup>

## Israel Moves Faster Than Planned

In all probability -- though this has never been established -- the original plan was to attack after the American elections. It seemed possible that the British and French would be more likely to get Sixth Fleet and diplomatic aid after Eisenhower had received his mandate. However, Washington began on the 15th to warn the Israelis not to make any move in any direction. Eisenhower was opposed to giving Israel any support -- diplomatic or otherwise -- and indeed promised active opposition. The Israelis reconsidered. They convinced themselves that Washington could not oppose the attack if it were made before the election. The conditions of military preparedness point to the conclusion that the Israelis suddenly advanced the date of their attack and caught the other two members of the triumvirate deshabillé. The accounts of Eden and Nutting do not agree, but Eisenhower remembered "When they finally started, the move was not coordinated. But I'm sure of this. I think the Israelis probably jumped the gun on them and that the others were caught somewhat unprepared, at least the British."<sup>2</sup>

This point is corroborated by a telegram from Douglas Dillon in Paris -- a message which was delayed en route to Washington. It was the only warning of imminent action and was sent on October 19. Jacques Chaban-Delmas, a Minister of State, reported to Dillon, his good friend, that the French and British were jointly plotting a military venture against Nasser. Dillon recalled: "I guess I was the first person to learn of the plans for military action and reported it to State some days before it began. The military action was scheduled to begin a few days after our election -- something happened in the period in between -- I've never known what -- and it was speeded up by about a week. CIA agreed with me."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Beaufre, op. cit., p. 81, and Brombergers, op. cit., p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> Eisenhower, Dulles Oral History.

<sup>3</sup> C. Douglas Dillon, Dulles Oral History (Princeton University, 1965), p. 32.

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Ben Gurion rushed to Paris on October 22 to ensure Franco-British support. He was so unsure of Eden that he demanded a commitment in writing. The collusive plan was written down and signed in triplicate at Sevres on October 24. No one else has ever been allowed to see the Sevres accord, and only Mollet has attested to its existence.

On the same day, as the Sevres accord was being signed, Russian troops moved into Budapest to crush the Hungarian revolt. Two crises at once were difficult for Washington and both could not be dealt with thoroughly and effectively. No longer could Dulles focus his undivided attention on the Near East. Time in Washington was at a premium, for it was two weeks before the election and both Dulles and Eisenhower had to campaign.

For the Israelis, Hungary meant that the possibility of intervention by the Russians had lessened. A few warnings of impending hostilities reached Washington. U. N. Representative General Burns informed Hammarskjold that the Israelis had blocked all U. N. efforts to investigate incidents, and added, "There is nothing to keep Israeli military forces from grossly exaggerating circumstances of any incident, to provide occasion for retaliation."<sup>1</sup>

The American Ambassador in Tel Aviv cabled Washington that "the focus of activity might very shortly shift from the Jordanian border to Egypt. If Nasser won out shortly on the Suez issue Israel might then take military action to free the Straits of Tiran. I think the French would be interested in having a blow struck at Nasser from this side."<sup>2</sup>

Dulles called in Abba Eban and said "it would not be unnatural for Israel to believe that opportunities might arise in which it could acquire additional territory to augment its meagre area. . . . It is important that the U. S. and Israel should find ways to work together and it would be disastrous if the Israel Government took action which might seem to put it on the wrong side of the general armistice agreements between Israel and its Arab neighbors and of the U. N. Charter."<sup>3</sup>

Ben Gurion then made a bargain with the British and French. He had previously demanded that he be given cover from the start of hostilities. Eden had refused and said Britain would only take up arms after a ceasefire ultimatum had been delivered to Israel and Egypt and they had refused. Ben Gurion compromised, if he could get forty-five additional planes and French pilots to fly them he would "let Britain defer the pulverization

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<sup>1</sup>U. S. State Department, #432 (October 29, 1956) from New York.

<sup>2</sup>U. S. State Department, #229 (October 24, 1956) from Tel Aviv.

<sup>3</sup>U. S. State Department, Memo of Conversation (Eban, Dulles, October 15, 1956).



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of Egypt's air force until Nasser rejected the ultimatum. "<sup>1</sup> The three squadrons of jet fighters left France immediately for Kydda and Hatzor, Israel: two squadrons of Mystere IVs and one of F-84 Sabrejets -- all with French pilots. The American Ambassador in Tel Aviv reported simply "there has been unusual diplomatic activity between Israel and France. "<sup>2</sup>

On October 25, Jordan announced that she had joined the Egyptian-Syrian military command. The same day, 100,000 Israeli reservists were called up. Foreigners began to notice the disappearance of waiters and taxi drivers. The next day Washington received its first report of the secret move: "There has been IDF call up on considerable scale of reservist and civilian vehicles. There is a good deal of speculation that 'something big may happen'...and reference has been made to community of interests with French. "<sup>3</sup>

That same day in London General Keightly promised he could achieve a landing on November 6, and sent orders to have a "practice" loading-and-embarkation drill in Malta on October 29. The French Fleet had already dispatched its first convoys and twelve Constellations carried three regiments of paratroops to Cyprus. Word began to spread through the British invasion force in Malta that this was not "Exercise Boathook" but "the real thing. "

In an effort to save his prized targets, Nasser began moving Egyptian armor into the western desert, and Egyptian planes were flown into Saudi Arabia. At least one author believes the flights were at Soviet "suggestion. " "Most of the Soviet-built aircraft were moved from airfields near Alexandria first to Luxor and later to Syria, via, it is believed, Saudi Arabia. It is clear that the Soviet authorities took a decision not to allow the Egyptians to use this force of forty-five modern aircraft, and at the same time not to risk its capture [or demolition] by Egypt's opponents. "<sup>4</sup>

## Washington Reaction

In Washington Dulles said in staff conference "it's very strange that we have heard nothing whatever from the British for ten days. We must try to find out what they and

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<sup>1</sup> Love, op. cit., p. 465.

<sup>2</sup> U. S. State Department, #229 (October 24, 1956) from Tel Aviv.

<sup>3</sup> U. S. State Department, #415 (October 26, 1956) from Tel Aviv.

<sup>4</sup> Ivar Spector, The Soviet Union and the Arab World (Seattle: University of Washington, 1959), p. 186.

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the French are up to." Allen Dulles recalled his brother saying, "something's cooking here. I haven't heard anything about it. They haven't told me."<sup>1</sup>

The best account of Washington's reaction is a State Department summary: "On October 26, we learned of an Israeli mobilization which initially did not appear to be unusual because in periods of tension the Israelis often order partial mobilization. But the following day it was realized that the mobilization had reached substantial proportions and appeared to be far in excess of any measures required for normal defensive operations. The President thereupon sent a personal message to Ben Gurion expressing his concern and urging that there be no forcible initiative on the part of the Israeli Government which would endanger the peace. The following day, October 28, the President, noting the continued Israeli build-up, again got in touch with Mr. Ben Gurion setting forth in strong terms his concern and again asking the Israeli Government to do nothing which would endanger the peace. The President made a public announcement to this effect."<sup>2</sup>

Eisenhower's messages to Ben Gurion and similar phone calls to Eden grew out of CIA reports that by October 27 indicated the Israeli mobilization was for war and by the 28th that the direction was to be Egypt. Ben Gurion acknowledged "partial" mobilization but called it a "precautionary measure...prompted by a variety of factors including: a renewal of Fedayeen raids, the Egypt-Syria-Jordan alliance, Jordanian threats to destroy Israel, and the marshalling of Iraqi forces on Jordan's border."<sup>3</sup>

On October 28, Dulles again called in Abba Eban. In the meeting with Dulles, Eban adamantly maintained that Israel's preparations were wholly defensive and that absolutely no offensive action was even being considered. He added that the mobilization was not massive and only some units had been called up. Dulles said according to his information Israel was being totally mobilized. He said he thought that "at no previous time had Israel been as safe as it was today. The Jordanian situation had deteriorated with the growing weakness of the Government of Jordan. Iraqi troops had not moved into Jordan as previously planned. Egypt was presently engaged in a dispute with Britain and France. Israel was not endangered and might calculate that this was the best moment to move. If Israeli intentions were defensive, every factor in the situation would seem to indicate that Israel should not be as concerned. On the other hand, if Israeli intentions were aggressive, Israel might calculate there were factors in the situation which would make

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<sup>1</sup> Allen Dulles, Dulles Oral History, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> U. S. State Department, Background Memo, n. d.

<sup>3</sup> Love, op. cit., p. 474.

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it desirable to Israel to strike."<sup>1</sup> Eban again reassured the Secretary of State that his government had no intention of taking any action.

The State Department issued evacuation directives to embassies in Syria, Jordan, Israel and Egypt. The decision was made, on October 28, not to divert the U. S. Sixth Fleet from normal port calls. The evacuation of non-essential Americans was to be carried out by commercial air transport. The Fleet was only alerted to the possibility of future evacuation operations.

In another attempt to find out what the Israelis were up to, Abba Eban was called back to the State Department on October 29. Eban stated that the "Israeli mobilization has been purely precautionary and protective.... The United States need have no concern if it is able to restrain the Arab states.... No danger has arisen from Israeli defensive measures. The American press is distorting the situation by saying there is a danger."<sup>2</sup> Interrupting Eban, Fraser Wilkins entered the room with press tickers reporting Israeli forces had launched a massive invasion of Egypt at 1415 hours. Eban walked out.<sup>3</sup>

## ARMED CONFLICT

For Dwight D. Eisenhower, "October 20, 1956 was the start of the most crowded and demanding three weeks of my entire Presidency." The Suez War began on top of the Hungarian Revolution and the American Presidential elections. Israel's attack on Egypt came on October 29 -- the seventy-eighth anniversary of the signing of the Constantinople Convention respecting free navigation in the Suez Maritime Canal.

### Israel Advances

Israel's four axes of advance went into high gear. Assured of air cover, Dayan was prepared to take unusually great risks. At 1700 hours on the 29th, one of Israel's battalions parachuted into Mitla Pass. His 202nd brigade, less this battalion, moved overland and in 20 minutes took the frontier post of Kuntilla on the road to Mitla. Farther north, three brigades struck Egyptian defenses at Abu Agheila on the road to Kantara. From Eilath, another column started down the Gulf of Aqaba towards Sharm el Sheikh. An Israeli communique announced: "Units of the Israel defense forces have penetrated and attacked Fedayeen bases in the Kuntilla and Ras el Naqb area and have taken up positions to the west of the Nakhil road junction towards the Suez Canal. This operation

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<sup>1</sup> U. S. State Department, memo of conversation (Dulles, Eban, October 28, 1956).

<sup>2</sup> U. S. State Department, memo of conversation (Rountree, Eban, October 29, 1956).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

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was necessitated by the continuous Egyptian military attacks on citizens and on Israel land and sea communications, the purpose of which was to cause destruction and to deprive the people of Israel of the possibility of peaceful existence."<sup>1</sup>

Off the coast of Israel, three French destroyers (Kersaint, Bouvet, and Surcouf) began to protect the sea approaches to Haifa and Tel Aviv. The British aerial watch on Egyptian airfields began. Thirty-six French Mysteres and 36 F-84 Thunderstreaks, normally at St. Dizier and Dijon as part of the French NATO component, flew to Israel where they "were rapidly serviced for combat action the next day."<sup>2</sup> On Cyprus, French transport planes were loading supplies to be dropped at Mitla Pass for the Israeli troops.

A thousand miles away at Malta, two British destroyers (Daring and Defender) moved out of Silema Creek to lead the British invasion fleet. The British had 100 warships including five aircraft carriers, three cruisers, seventeen landing craft, 300 aircraft, and several submarines. The French had a smaller force of one battleship, two aircraft carriers, fourteen minesweepers, ten amphibious craft, 200 aircraft, and two submarines.<sup>3</sup> Between the two there were over a hundred freighters, troopships, and auxiliaries carrying twenty thousand vehicles and a hundred thousand men -- more men than Wellington had at Waterloo.

The Egyptian President was led to believe that this was just a large-scale reprisal raid. He had not received the message reporting Israeli parachute drops on the Mitla Pass. American Ambassador Hare went to see Nasser and found him calm, relaxed and "unable to understand what all the turmoil was about." The Ambassador asked for assistance in evacuations and Nasser while assuring help, seemed to think evacuation quite an extreme measure. Hare reported to Washington, "wished to get first hand impression of Nasser's reaction who, if he was not genuinely puzzled, put on a good act."<sup>4</sup>

In Washington, Assistant Secretary Rountree told Egyptian Ambassador Hussein that the U. S. planned to take appropriate action through the Security Council. Hussein registered the complaint that perhaps the U. S. had not done enough to restrain Israel.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Middle East Affairs (December, 1956), p. 472.

<sup>2</sup> Childers, op. cit., p. 288.

<sup>3</sup> Sir Charles Keightley, "Despatch," London Gazette (March 1957), p. 5327.

<sup>4</sup> U. S. State Department, #1193 from Cairo (October 29, 1956).

<sup>5</sup> U. S. State Department, memo of conversation (Rountree, Hussein, October 29, 1956).

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Dulles described his plan to several Near East Ambassadors: "We suggest the U. S., U. K., and France inscribe Israel's attack at once on the Security Council agenda, seeking action to exclude the giving of any assistance to Israel if it turns out, as seems to be the case, that Israel is the primary aggressor." He added, "the important thing is to keep the matter localized and prevent its growing into a general conflagration with the Russians coming in."<sup>1</sup> In London, Ambassador Aldrich asked Selwyn Lloyd if the British knew anything about the Israeli attack or planned any moves. Lloyd said emphatically that the British knew nothing and planned nothing.

Eisenhower learned of the Israeli attack just as he was about to make a campaign speech in Richmond, Virginia. He made the speech and returned to Washington for a 7 p. m. meeting with John Foster Dulles, Wilson, Radford, and Allen Dulles. The Secretary of State aired his suspicion of Anglo-French collusion and possible intervention with Israel. Radford's discussion of that meeting is probably accurate: "The decision taken, I thought, was a masterpiece. We sent to the British and French -- knowing that they were in cahoots to do something, but not exactly what -- a message that we (the U. S.) would stand by our tripartite agreement to defend the victim of aggression without naming who we thought that was. In order words (and this, as I understand the discussion, was done on purpose), if they wanted to come back and say, 'thank you very much, we certainly agree with you, and we think the Israelis are the victims,' we could agree with them or disagree. If we disagreed, nothing could be done to settle the argument for at least three or four days. By that time the Israelis would have cleaned up on the Egyptians. I do not think we would have been too unhappy if that had happened."<sup>2</sup>

A White House meeting was held to discuss possible U. S. military moves in the Mediterranean. The possibility of Soviet intervention was considered. Without that, however, U. S. direct intervention was considered undesirable and for the moment, "our naval forces would be placed in a position to evacuate American citizens if that was necessary."<sup>3</sup> The entire Sixth Fleet was then proceeding to Souda Bay, Crete, and received orders to prepare for the evacuation of Alexandria and Haifa. Two task groups were deployed for these operations.

The Israeli columns continued to march across Sinai. After a dawn battle on the 30th the 202nd managed to disperse the defenders of El Thamed on the southern axis. There was another battle at Abu-Aghelia on the main Cairo-Jerusalem road, but there

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<sup>1</sup> U. S. State Department, memo of conversation (Dulles, and the Ambassadors of Pakistan, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, October 29, 1956).

<sup>2</sup> Radford, Dulles Oral History, p. 76.

<sup>3</sup> Sherman Adams, Firsthand Report (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), p. 256.



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the Egyptians were standing fast. In the Mitla Pass the Israelis had misread their position and came under fire when they began to head toward the Suez Canal. As Sharon's brigade moved to reinforce the men at Mitla, it was attacked by Egyptian Migs.

In Cairo, Nasser was reacting calmly, still thinking the battles in eastern Sinai were not an invasion. Egyptian army communiques reported enemy contact at Kuntilla, Thamed, and Nakhil, but they claimed the Israelis were being wiped out and Egyptians were engaged in mopping up operations. Nasser's attitude, according to Hare, was "in part a pose in conformity with GOE policy of playing down any tensions which threaten to develop into situation British-French might seize upon to enter Egypt with force. Also appears to be basic confidence that Israelis have no intention to engage in all-out war at this time."<sup>1</sup> The Egyptian Council of Ministers met and only then "began to realize the extent to which the Israelis appeared to mean business."<sup>2</sup> They decided to strengthen Egyptian defenses by the dispatch of reinforcements to Sinai. The 6th Battalion was delayed at the Suez Canal, but later arrived at Mitla. Egyptians marshalled their armor at Bir Gifgafa and reinforced their troops at Abu Agheila. Nasser made a small attempt at getting his air force up. Egypt had only 30 operational Migs, 10 operational Ilyushins, and about 40 trained pilots.<sup>3</sup> Only a few of these got into the air, and the Israelis shot down three Migs on October 30.

## Britain and France Make Their Move

Eden called a Cabinet meeting at which there was a long and bitter discussion. The Prime Minister then went before the House of Commons where he outlined the threat to the Suez Canal: "the Israeli spearhead is not far from the banks."<sup>4</sup> He then read the Anglo-French ultimatum to Egypt and Israel, which asked the combatants to cease fighting and withdraw their military forces to a distance of 10 miles from the Canal within twelve hours. The Egyptian Government was asked to agree to Anglo-French forces moving temporarily into the key positions of Port Said, Ismailia, and Suez. Failure to accept the ultimatum would entail the intervention of British and French forces "in whatever strength may be necessary to secure compliance." It is well to note that under these terms the Israelis could advance to within 10 miles of the Canal, as they were not there yet. Sinai was to be handed over to the Israelis -- Nasser's front line was to be fixed 100 miles behind his frontier, Israel's 90 miles in front of hers. This would mean cutting off a large part of Egypt as well as those troops still in Sinai. The

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<sup>1</sup> U. S. State Department, #1223 from Cairo (October 30, 1956).

<sup>2</sup> U. S. State Department, #1216 from Cairo (October 30, 1956).

<sup>3</sup> Childers, op. cit., p. 283.

<sup>4</sup> Love, op. cit., p. 507.

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most transparent demand was the 'temporary occupation' of the Egyptian side of the Canal whether or not the ultimatum was rejected. Egypt lost both ways. One State Department official called it "the most brutal ultimatum in modern history."<sup>1</sup>

The President learned of the ultimatum on the press tickers. Eisenhower thought it a deliberate British deception and was deeply offended that his colleagues had secretly made such a move. Allen Dulles later said, "I know my brother was terribly surprised and terribly hurt.... Foster was really very deeply hurt that the British and French had gotten together on this secretly."<sup>2</sup>

Their surprise was real, as can be demonstrated by a State Department memo which suggested: "we should make an all-out effort to ascertain what, if any, agreement exists.... If, for example, we should discover that there is a Franco-Israeli or even a Franco-Anglo-Israeli understanding or agreement, our technical position under the tripartite declaration would be much affected.... We should use every diplomatic and intelligence source to obtain this information."<sup>3</sup>

That same day, October 30, Dulles called in Coulson, the British Charge, and told him, "The ultimatum issued to Israel and Egypt is a brutal affair. On the one hand, Egypt was called upon to surrender the Canal and a very large part of its territory and, on the other hand, Israel is allowed to keep the territory which it has occupied in the Sinai Peninsula. This action is a great tragedy both as it concerns our relations with France and England and as it concerns the world situation. The intended action in Egypt may well obliterate the success we have long awaited in Eastern Europe. The British Government has recently kept us deliberately in the dark about its plans."<sup>4</sup>

Eisenhower instructed Lodge at the U.N. to block Anglo-French military action with every means at his disposal. Angered at the British and French delegates, and himself ardently anti-colonial, Lodge insisted, in the Security Council, that the American resolution be brought to a vote. The resolution asked all U.N. members to refrain from either using force or aiding Israel. The Soviets were the first to vote in favor of the resolution. Britain and France exercised their first veto in U.N. history. Then the two co-conspirators joined in vetoing a Russian resolution. The Security Council was paralyzed.

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Johnson, The Suez War (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1957).

<sup>2</sup> Allen Dulles, op. cit., p. 504.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. State Department, Letter to Hoover from Rountree (October 30, 1956).

<sup>4</sup> U.S. State Department, Memo of Conversation (Dulles, Coulson, October 30, 1956).

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The ultimatum was immediately accepted by Israel on the night of October 30. Egypt refused many hours later. Eisenhower sent an urgent personal message to Eden and Mollet appealing against any resort to armed force. Meanwhile in Malta, the British 6th Battalion began loading their Centurion tanks on landing ships. Already on board were the 40th and 42nd Commandos with their tracked amphibians.

The U. S. Navy set maximum readiness in all U. S. fleets and made several redeployments (in the event the Sixth Fleet needed to be strengthened) including moving a WESTPAC amphibious group and Marine battalion to the Indian Ocean. An attack carrier striking force was alerted in Norfolk. The DEW line was activated. SITREPS were initiated. And a HUK group left Rotterdam and sailed toward the Mediterranean.

In Alexandria, Consul General Bar Washburn heard in code on his radio that Sixth Fleet, as requested by Cairo, was coming into Alexandria. Washburn quickly found the Egyptian governor and requested permission for the already incoming task force to enter the harbor. Permission was eventually granted.<sup>1</sup>

Before dawn on the 31st the British landing ships had set sail from Malta. Behind them two aircraft carriers were taking on board the 16th and 45th Commando Brigades -- those who would pioneer the helicopter paratroop drop. The ultimatum was to expire at 6 a. m. Egyptian time, but there were two Naval engagements before that expiration.

A combined Anglo-French Naval force had been patrolling in the Gulf of Suez south of the Canal (the cruiser Newfoundland, destroyer Diana, frigates Crane and Modeste, the French minesweeper Jasmine, and the escorts Gazelle and La Perouse). The Newfoundland spotted an Egyptian merchant convoy heading north with a darkened ship following. The British turned on their search lights and found the ship to be the Egyptian frigate Domiat. The cruiser flashed "stop, or I fire." The Domiat turned on the cruiser full speed. The Newfoundland fired and the Domiat capsized.<sup>2</sup>

One hour before the ultimatum expired, the French cruiser Kersaint fired on the Egyptian destroyer Ibrahim el Awal off the coast of Haifa. The presence of a ship from Sixth Fleet TF 62 in the harbor caused some confusion. French Commander Barjot cabled headquarters. "Have crippled Egyptian destroyer. But not entirely sure Egyptian. If this should prove a mistake, it is not a deliberate attack... on the Sixth Fleet."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Bar V. Washburn, May 14, 1969.

<sup>2</sup> A. J. Barker, Suez: The Six Day War (Faber, 1964), p. 104.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas, op. cit., p. 128.



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Operation Musketeer was set in motion. General Keightley gave the order for action at 5 a. m. London time on the 31st. The Malta assault fleet had set sail, but was still 500 miles from Egypt and moving at 10 knots -- the speed of its slow landing craft. Other ships set sail from Algiers, Marseilles, and some from Southampton. The French cruiser George-Leygues bombarded the Egyptian defenses at Rafa. French fighters established their umbrella over Israeli cities.

Through Ambassador Aldrich in London Eden discovered the RAF was about to bomb Cairo airport, and American Ambassador Hare was begging a delay. The convoy of American evacuees was driving along the airport road on the way to Alexandria. British Defense Minister Head called Keightley, who radioed and recalled the planes. There followed a ten-hour delay in the bombing of Egypt.<sup>1</sup>

Even the most optimistic onlookers were surprised at the extraordinary success of the Israeli onslaught. The Kuntilla column took Nakhl and went on to join the paratroops at the Mitla Pass. The Israeli 7th Armored Brigade hooked around and Abu-Agheila was taken one hour later. The Israeli columns left and continued down the road toward Ismailia. Egyptian reinforcements met them on the way. Israel had command of the air in Sinai, but Ben Gurion feared Egyptian infantry reinforcement and use of Migs. Furious at the British delay, he wanted to pull back his paratroops at Mitla, but Dayan dissuaded him.

In Egypt, the people were being told of their great victories in Sinai: everywhere the Egyptian army and air force was victorious. Nasser, however, learned of his true position. His troubles were compounded by the Anglo-French ultimatum which he frankly could not believe. His armored brigade and other reinforcements were still being sent against Israel in Sinai. He decided to gamble -- "a diplomatic victory would annul all the military gains his enemies had made or would make. He was certain that the U. S. and Soviet Union would support him."<sup>2</sup> Yet he recalled his beleaguered troops from Sinai to Suez in order to have some small means of repelling the invading forces if diplomatic efforts failed. Nasser then called in Ambassador Hare and gave him a message for Eisenhower: "Egypt has decided to defend her sovereignty and territory against Anglo-French aggression in addition to defending her sovereignty and territory against Israeli aggression. The Egyptian Government has decided to ask for U. S. support against Anglo-French aggression."<sup>3</sup> Nasser, when asked, said he did indeed mean military support in case of military aggression, and added that he had decided to ask the U. S. in preference to the Soviet Union.

<sup>1</sup>Interview with Raymond Hare (August, 1969).

<sup>2</sup>Robert St. John, The Boss: The Story of Gamal Abdel Nasser (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960), p. 263.

<sup>3</sup>U. S. State Department, #1240 (October 31, 1956) from Cairo.

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## The U.S. Reacts

Washington assured Nasser that the U.S. would endeavor to help the Egyptians through every diplomatic means, primarily in the U.N. Eisenhower prepared a speech, telecast that evening, in which he pointed out that the U.S. had neither been forewarned nor consulted by its allies and therefore had the right to dissent from "these actions... taken in error.... It is -- and will remain -- the dedicated purpose of your government to do all in its power to localize the fighting and to end the conflict."<sup>1</sup>

The U.S. Sixth Fleet was in the Eastern Mediterranean. On October 31, Dulles considered having the fleet actively obstruct the Anglo-French armada. However, he decided that he could not do this except by shooting at his NATO allies. In effect, the fleet was a passive obstacle as its task forces were in Haifa where they caused anxiety, and in Alexandria where they inadvertently prevented aerial bombardment of the harbor and protected the Egyptian navy. When CINCNELM, Admiral Boone, arrived in Turkey (activating his CINCSPECOMME command), the State Department decided to let Defense announce that his transfer was related only to the evacuation of U.S. personnel and not to the possible intervention of U.S. military forces in the area.

Dulles, Eisenhower, and Lodge made every effort to stop the allied powers through the U.N. Eden and Mollet were not prepared for such active U.S. opposition. Pineau later said, "we thought there would be official condemnation but that practically, we would benefit for a time from a certain neutrality."<sup>2</sup>

## Britain and France Attack

The delayed Anglo-French air offensive began at dusk on October 31. Two hundred Canberras, Venoms and Valiants, along with forty French Thunderstreaks, operating from the aircraft carriers Albion, Bulwark, and Eagle and from Malta and Cyprus swept from a "discreet height of over 40,000 feet" over four Delta and eight Canal airfields. Three waves of bombers swept over Egypt before midnight. Civilians were warned by Cyprus Radio, bombing was accurate, and Egyptian casualties were few. Nasser ordered a general retreat.

Three British Venom and two French Thunderstreak squadrons as well as Seahawks from the British carriers strafed Egyptian airfields with rockets, cannon, and machine guns. More than 50 Egyptian aircraft were destroyed and 40 others seriously damaged.

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<sup>1</sup> Love, op. cit., p. 519.

<sup>2</sup> Christian Pineau, Dulles Oral History (Princeton University, 1964), p. 22.



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The Egyptians announced that British bombs had sunk a blockship in the Suez Canal. Egypt broke relations with Britain and France.

On November 1, in Alexandria, 3 ships of the Sixth Fleet (Chilton, Thuban, and Ft. Snelling) began loading evacuees through a Marine-manned evacuation center. This task group was prepared to take those measures necessary to provide for the safety of the evacuees and landing force personnel and to complete the evacuation, using force if necessary. Nationals of 29 countries were loaded on these ships. French nationals tried to be evacuated also, but Egypt would not give them permits to leave the country. In total, the task force evacuated 1240 U. S. citizens and 569 foreign nationals.

Off the coast of Israel USS Cambria was ordered to the Gaza Strip to evacuate U. N. supervisory personnel and preparations were made for an assault landing if necessary. In Jordan, 25 Americans, having been denied travel across Israel for evacuation by Sixth Fleet, went to Beirut by car when the road was reopened. CINCNELM arrived in Turkey and took command on Pocono. The HUK group from Rotterdam arrived in the Mediterranean. At this time the main body of Sixth Fleet was in the way of the approaching Anglo-French armada.

## U. N. Involvement and Cease-Fire Resolution

In New York, the General Assembly debated the Suez Crisis. For Dulles, November 1 was an extremely awkward day. He was to move against his allies. "It was in many ways the hardest decision... that the President and I ever had to take."<sup>1</sup> Dulles delivered one of his most famous speeches late that night from the rostrum of the United Nations. He announced that he came "with a very heavy heart to urge all parties to agree to a ceasefire, stop military movements, and withdraw behind armistice lines pending the reopening of the canal."<sup>2</sup> Allen Dulles later recalled, "the toughest decision my brother had -- and I know one that really tore him to pieces -- was when he had to go into the U. N. and practically demand that the British and French withdraw. I don't think he had any question in his mind as to what was right, if we were putting any faith in the U. N.... He was very conscious of the effect this would have on relations with Britain and France."<sup>3</sup>

A long and bitter debate followed Dulles' speech and lasted into the early hours of Friday morning, November 2. The Security Council met simultaneously, and there the

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<sup>1</sup> Gerson, op. cit., p. 296.

<sup>2</sup> Gerson, op. cit., p. 296.

<sup>3</sup> Allen Dulles, op. cit., p. 73.

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U.S. ardently opposed the Soviets' invasion of Hungary. Finally, Dulles' resolution was brought to a vote in the General Assembly. It was passed 64 to 5 -- the greatest majority in U.N. history.

Egypt promptly accepted the cease-fire. By the early morning hours of November 2, the Egyptians had completed their evacuation of Sinai, leaving troops cut off in Sharm al-Sheikh and the Gaza Strip. Nasser asked Ambassador Hare to convey his appreciation to the President and said that at last he recognized that the U.S. had been sincere in warning that the British and French might embark on a policy that did not have American approval.

Other Arab countries were rallying around Egypt. Syria informed Washington that she had placed her armed forces under Egyptian command and that she was breaking relations with Britain and France. Syrians cut the International Petroleum Company's (IPC) oil pipeline. Jordan broke relations with France as did Iraq. Nuri agreed to a meeting of the Baghdad Pact excluding Britain. Wholesale burning and looting of British property broke out in Bahrein.

Eden was studying the U.N. cease-fire resolution and trying to see a way out, an honorable retreat. Pineau immediately flew to London and buoyed up the failing Eden's resolve. Eden was too weak physically to stand firm against his opposition.

Mollet was trying to speed up the landing. Admiral Barjot wanted the invasion to begin in three days, on the 5th. Part of the French fleet was 18 hours ahead of the Royal Navy, and with the diversion of the Jean Bart (battleship), the Foudre (dock-carrier), and LST's, "the French Fleet will start the operation without waiting for the Royal Navy."<sup>1</sup> Admiral Dunford-Slater was against this plan. The main forces of the Franco-British armada were coming together in a "Y" formation making five columns -- yet still three days sailing time from Egypt. The armada was slow as it kept the pace of its landing craft -- not even 10 knots.

Egypt was being bombed by corsairs from the French carriers Lafayette and Arromanches. In Alexandria harbor, the Sixth Fleet Task Force 61 prepared to depart with its 1,528 evacuees. Egyptian Admiral Solomon Ezzat started a rumor that Alexandria harbor had been mined by the British. The American Task Force commander cabled Ezzat to stop the rumor. Meanwhile, Nasser ordered an old Egyptian minesweeper out of mothballs to lead the flotilla out.<sup>2</sup> The Sixth Fleet back-up ships as well as the

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<sup>1</sup> Brombergers, op. cit., p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Bar V. Washburn, May 14, 1969.

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now north-bound evacuation group were running afoul of the British and French who were envious of their power but put-out by their presence: "The inconveniences of acting without our most powerful ally" wrote one British author, "were...becoming evident: The U.S. 6th Fleet, helping to evacuate U.S. civilians in Alexandria, was standing in the middle of the British carrier zone."<sup>1</sup> Admiral Dunford-Slater asked Admiral Brown to move. Brown refused.

At Gaza, Sixth Fleet ships were lying in wait to help the U.N. advisory team. At 7:30 a. m., the USS Cambria anchored 1000 yards offshore and evacuated 25 members of the U.N. team.

Also on November 2, Egypt began sinking blockships in the Canal. The British cruiser Newfoundland pulverized an Egyptian frigate in the Red Sea. Two Soviet submarines were sighted coming through Gibraltar into the Mediterranean, and the Soviets began moving into Hungary.

At noon on Saturday, 3 November, Eden announced the Anglo-French reply to the General Assembly's cease-fire resolution. They had rejected it. The Prime Minister said operations would continue until Egypt and Israel accepted a U.N. police force and the U.N. had decided to constitute and maintain such a force until the Suez problem was settled and an Arab-Israeli peace was reached. The British and French required that their forces remain stationed between the combatants until the U.N. force arrived. While Eden was speaking, "hostilities" in Sinai ceased. Khan Yunis surrendered and Egyptian-Israeli fighting stopped for a period of three days. The Egyptian army withdrew from Sinai. As Eden was speaking, Ben Gurion decided to accept the cease-fire resolution and the Israeli cabinet declared this to Hammarskjold.

It was on November 3rd that Dulles entered the hospital for a cancer operation. While he was there a month and Herbert Hoover, Jr., became acting Secretary of State, Dulles kept up with the crisis and continued to play his hand strongly. In his new capacity, Hoover received a message from Mustapha Amin, one of Nasser's advisors, through the CIA. Amin noted that the "position [of] the U.S. [is] now at its highest peak but it will not remain there if Egypt [is] completely defeated," and that the "Nasser government [is] completely disillusioned with Russia and that the U.S. can have anything it wants so long as we act promptly."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> CIA Memo to Hoover (November 3, 1956).

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While the French Government announced it would not accept the cease-fire, Pineau went to London to try to convince the British to speed up the joint landing. The air-borne assault was advanced twenty-four hours. The Franco-British paratroopers in Cyprus were alerted. Head went to Cyprus, taking instructions to keep damage at Port Said to a minimum and to cancel all plans to move on Cairo.<sup>1</sup> The last bombers to fly over Egypt were to go that evening, November 3rd. Also on that day Syria announced the movement of her troops into Jordan.

On November 4, while the Soviets were attacking Budapest in full strength, Moscow protested the Anglo-French blockage of shipping lanes in the Mediterranean and Red Seas. An intelligence source reported that the Soviets requested permission for six warships (including a cruiser and at least three destroyers) to transit the Turkish Straits from the Black Sea.<sup>2</sup> Communist China too warned the U.K. and France to halt military operations in Egypt and promised aid to the Egyptians if the war continued. Iraq, Syria, and Jordan, expecting an Israeli attack, fully mobilized.

At the U.N., Hammarskjold announced that he had received offers of military contingents and asked for the establishment of a command for the U.N. force. This was passed 57-0 by the General Assembly.

## Britain and France Continue Attacks

The seaborne part of the Anglo-French expedition was sailing east from Malta. General Stockwell sailed from Limassol on his headquarters ship, the Tyne, with the second group of paratroopers.

At about the same moment, CNO Arleigh Burke was called in to see Dulles. The Secretary asked where the Sixth Fleet was. Upon discovering that the main body of the fleet was northwest of Cairo, Dulles asked if we couldn't stop the Anglo-French invasion. Burke assured Dulles that the only way to stop them was to shoot. While the meeting continued, a message was sent to Admiral Brown (COMSIXTHFLT) to be prepared. Brown replied "Who's the enemy?" and Burke sent back "Don't take any guff from anybody!" The discussions in Washington continued.<sup>3</sup>

As the Anglo-French armada continued toward Egypt the USS Cutlass (SS 478) maintained a watch on all air and sea traffic from Cyprus while Hardhead (SS 365) did the same for the area near Alexandria.

<sup>1</sup> Love, op. cit., p. 578.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Navy, #071827 (November 7, 1956), from Ankara.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Arleigh Burke (July 3, 1969) and Naval messages.



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Washington received the message from Cairo that Egyptian officials would welcome Sixth Fleet aid as it was the only force capable of acting in the capacity of an interim U. N. police force.<sup>1</sup>

By the evening of the 4th the French Navy had formed two columns with three LCTs in each (including Le Laita, Le Cheriff, La Ronce, and La Foudre). Three navy escorts joined the convoy -- Le Berbere, Le Touareq, and Le Soudanais. The convoy carried the first paratroop group, scheduled to jump the following morning.

In the early morning hours of November 5th 600 British parachutists landed at Gamill Airport, 10 kilometers west of Port Said. Then 487 Frenchmen landed on the beach south of Port Said. This was the first helicopter-borne amphibious assault ever made. It took 90 minutes, and helicopters began bringing back casualties before the landing was completed. The helicopters dropped water, batteries, and other supplies within an hour. "All this...demonstrated as nothing else could have done the full and startling potentialities of the combination of carriers, helicopters and parachutists."<sup>2</sup>

A second wave of Anglo-French landings occurred at 1:45 p. m. and the Egyptian commander El Moguy agreed to discuss the terms of surrender. The British misunderstood and thought Nasser had surrendered. "The cease-fire talks failed" according to the American consul in Port Said, "because the Egyptian delegation insisted on referring all questions to the government at Cairo which would not agree to come to any kind of terms unless the Anglo-French forces completely withdrew."<sup>3</sup> Fighting in the streets resumed that evening.

## The Specter of Soviet Involvement

In the afternoon of November 5th the Suez Crisis took on a new dimension. Soviet Premier Bulganin sent notes to the governments of Great Britain, France and Israel. The warnings differed in severity and explicitness. In the note to Israel, the Soviets pointed out that "the very existence of Israel as a state" was in jeopardy. London and Paris received the ultimatum: "In what position would Britain [France] have found herself if she had been attacked by more powerful states possessing every kind of modern destructive weapon?... such as rockets.... We are fully determined to crush the aggressors and restore peace in the Middle East through the use of force." The only

<sup>1</sup> U. S. State Department, #1314 (November 14, 1956) from Cairo.

<sup>2</sup> Bernard Fergusson, The Watery Maze (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1961), p. 397.

<sup>3</sup> American Consulate, Port Said; Despatch (November 13, 1956).



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direct mention of atomic weapons was in a note to Washington, "The Soviet Union and the United States are... the two great powers which possess all modern types of arms, including the atomic and hydrogen weapons." Bulganin suggested that Russian warships cooperate with the Sixth Fleet to bring hostilities to an end. They also proposed to the Security Council a joint Russian-American military force which would intervene if the Anglo-French operation was not halted within twelve hours.

Eisenhower's reaction to the Soviet threats was that "if those fellows start something, we may have to hit em -- and, if necessary with everything in the bucket."<sup>1</sup> According to Sherman Adams, "Eisenhower called the suggested American-Soviet intervention 'unthinkable' and dismissed the proposal as an attempt to divert world attention from Hungary, where, the President charged, the Russian Army "at this very moment is brutally repressing the human rights of the Hungarian people."<sup>2</sup>

The threat of Soviet attack against Britain and France brought in the North Atlantic Treaty. Some authors have thought that NATO would only apply if the Soviets attacked a member country's homeland, but in a conversation between Robert Murphy and Alphand, the French Ambassador in Washington, it was noted that the Treaty arrangement did indeed cover the situation, and "if the Soviets should intervene against British and French troops, NATO obligations would come into play." In the same conversation Mr. Murphy said of the Russian proposal "That we had not completed our analysis of this message but that it seems to indicate one of two things: (1) a diversionary action to take away attention from the situation in Hungary and (2) a real intention on the part of the Soviet Union to intervene in the Middle East. Our impression is that their action was motivated by the first alternative, but we cannot afford to exclude the possibility that it is the second."<sup>3</sup>

CINCPACFLT, in an intelligence summary, noted, "possibilities exist Soviet armed intervention in ME and all that it implies although as yet no evidence unusual dispositions Soviet forces."<sup>4</sup> CINCNELM reported 4 C-124's and 12 C-119's were being put on alert in Europe.

The next morning, November 6, Nasser asked the U.S. for Sixth Fleet aid in order to forestall Soviet intervention. Nasser believed "only the intervention of the U.S. Sixth Fleet can preserve the position of the U.S. in Egypt and take the initiative away from the

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<sup>1</sup> Eisenhower, Dulles Oral History.

<sup>2</sup> Adams, op. cit., p. 258.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. State Department, Memo of Conversation (Alphand, Murphy, November 5, 1956).

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Navy, #060436Z CINCPACFLT (November 6, 1956).

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Soviets. Nasser added that to reject publicly a Soviet offer of aid would brand him as a traitor to Egypt. However, he stated categorically that he has not asked for Soviet assistance... consider significant fact this message repeated and urgent request for Sixth Fleet intervention."<sup>1</sup> Eisenhower indicated he would continue to work in Egypt's interest through the U.N.

From Paris, U.S. Ambassador Dillon reported, "Eastern European experts in Foreign Office believe it more likely that U.S.S.R. will abstain from direct intervention, possibly supplying volunteers and materiel to Arabs if conflict is prolonged in Egypt. [They] regard Soviet proposal to U.S. for joint action as gambit intended to demoralize Western nations, frightening them with specter of U.S. - Soviet collaboration which would spell end of Western Alliance. French greatly relieved at U.S. rejection of Soviet proposal."<sup>2</sup>

Reports started coming in during the afternoon of November 6 of Soviet military movements. CINCNELM requested "any available information including times, types and especially direction to confirm report U.K. Government received by telephone from Ankara 061330Z jet aircraft over-flying Turkey and RAF alerted. Have made flash report this incident."<sup>3</sup> A report from London noted a British Foreign Office source said "appears Soviets likely, if they have not already begun, to move air units into Syria."<sup>4</sup> The American Ambassador in Moscow made this estimate: "Short of deliberate military operations, Soviet capabilities to exert military influence Suez situation include: (1) clandestine movement of token volunteer forces by air or submarine, (2) overt movement by Naval escorted shipping of volunteers and/or supplies, (3) Adriatic based clandestine submarine action against Anglo- French forces under guise as Egyptians, (4) long range submarine attack south of canal disguised as above, (5) overt Naval visit to any Egyptian port threatened by Anglo- French action, (6) movement bomber and fighter aircraft to or through Syrian bases for employment by volunteer crews ignoring overflight considerations of Iran, Iraq, Turkey or Greece.... Foregoing estimate by service attaches of Soviet military capabilities are confined to operations in direct support Egypt and do not include possibility actions more serious nature which would involve world war, such as open bombing Cyprus or Anglo/French troops Suez Canal. Furthermore, it does not of course attempt to answer question whether or not Soviets will take any military action."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> CIA Memo to Hoover (November 6, 1956) and State Department #1350 to Cairo (November 6, 1956).

<sup>2</sup> U.S. State Department, #2232 (November 6, 1956) from Paris.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Navy, #061624Z CINCNELM (November 6, 1956).

<sup>4</sup> U.S. State Department, #2510 (November 6, 1956) from London.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. State Department, #1093 (November 6, 1956) from Moscow.

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In intelligence circles rumors began flying: "large-scale redeployments of Soviet ground forces reported along Turkish border;" "Soviets going into Egypt carrying 'special' weapons." <sup>1</sup>

CNO's estimate was that the U. S. S. R. "(a) will almost certainly not attack metropolitan U. K. or France; (b) will probably not employ Soviet forces on a large scale in Eastern Med; (c) may make small-scale attacks by air or sub against U. K. and French forces in E. Med.; (d) will continue to furnish military aid in the form of material, technicians, and logistics to Syria, they will probably send volunteers." <sup>2</sup> Further, that "if U. S. S. R. should carry out threats [of] armed intervention [in] Egypt, it could use warships and aircraft it maintains in Black Sea area for initial attacks. These warships consist of 2 OBB, 2 CA, 6 CL, and 52 destroyer and escort types. . . . Soviets have about 2,000 jet fighters and about 500 jet bombers located [in] areas on or near Black Sea. BULL, BADGER, BISON and BEAR aircraft based Western U. S. S. R. could cover entire Med area." <sup>3</sup> The U. S. Atlantic Fleet was put on alert.

In Egypt the Allied assault landing force was cleaning up snipers, mortars and machine guns. At least one naval historian reported that American warships were in port at Alexandria and Port Said causing difficulties for the Anglo-French invasion fleet. "Those at Alexandria were actually moored alongside Russian-built Egyptian destroyers, but French naval aircraft nevertheless succeeded in setting fire to one of the Egyptian ships." <sup>4</sup> Whereas Egypt and Israel had both accepted the ceasefire, fighting continued in Port Said and Alexandria. That evening Port Said surrendered and an armored column set off south to Suez.

## Britain and France Accept Ceasefire

The main Franco-British force was seventy-five miles from the Canal when, that evening (November 6), the British cabinet met to vote on continuation of the war. Eden lost and acceded to the wishes of the cabinet, setting the end of British military operations at midnight that night. This upset the French who felt the Canal was within grasp. Anthony Nutting explained why the British chose to stop: "Although these Russian threats and gestures closely preceded the final ceasefire at midnight on November 6, it is fair to say that they had no more influence on the decision of Britain and France to stop

<sup>1</sup> Charles J. V. Murphy, "Washington and The World," Fortune (V. 55, January 3, 1957), p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> U. S. Navy, #062103Z CNO to all (November 6, 1956).

<sup>3</sup> U. S. Navy, #062125Z CNO to all (November 6, 1956).

<sup>4</sup> Paul E. Garbutt, Naval Challenge 1945-1961 (London: MacDonald & Co., 1961).

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fighting than had our intervention in Egypt upon the Russian decision to crush the Hungarian revolt at all costs. Far more decisive were the political and economic pressures that were building up almost hourly upon the British and French Governments -- the closing of the Canal and stoppage of Middle East oil shipments, the run on the pound, the fury of the Americans and the hostility of the commonwealth."<sup>1</sup>

When the Anglo-French ceasefire was announced, Indian Prime Minister Nehru "sent a personal message to Eisenhower proposing with majority Afro-Arab-Asian support, that the U.S. Sixth Fleet should be sent to Port Said at once to enforce, as the vanguard of a U.N. force, the ceasefire resolutions. Nasser said he would allow U.S. Marines to land."<sup>2</sup>

## Crisis Within a Crisis Begins

During the next few days Soviet intervention began to look more and more probable to the U.S. Navy. On November 7 the U.S.S.R. began recruiting 'volunteers' to aid Egypt. It was reported that the Soviets were about to transit 6 warships through the straits from the Black Sea.<sup>3</sup> The crisis had changed. Whereas most of the world was heaving a sigh of relief at the Suez ceasefire, the Soviets continued their sabre-rattling and Western intelligence circles continued to pick up "evidence" that the Russians meant business. Most, if not all, historians see November 6 as the end of the crisis and the beginning of a winding-down period. In fact, the crisis, measured in terms of military preparedness and fear of world war, had not yet reached its peak.

On November 7 Task Force 26 consisting of Forrestal, F.D.R., Des Moines, DESRON 26 and DESDIV 322 sailed from CONUS and operated in the Eastern Atlantic as a stand-by task force. Submarines were to be deployed "to reconnaissance patrols in the North Atlantic for surveillance Soviet Naval Forces." The message ended: "maintain readiness to execute emergency war plans."<sup>4</sup> A message sent to CINCPACFLT ended with the same sentence and began: "prepare to sail carrier task force earliest from CONUS to WESTPAC and carrier task force from WESTPAC to chop MIDEASTFOR area."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Nutting, op. cit., p. 144.

<sup>2</sup> Robertson, op. cit., p. 263.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Navy, #071827 CNO to all (November 7, 1956).

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Navy, #070451 CNO to all (November 7, 1956).

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Navy, #070459 CNO to all (November 7, 1956).

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The State Department noted that Iraqi, Syrian, "and possibly Saudi Arabian forces had entered Jordan, and a tense situation exists along the Israeli-Jordan border."<sup>1</sup> The next day, November 8, brought more tension. Reports came through that a British Canberra was shot down over Syria at 45,000 feet tending to "confirm that Syria has Migs probably manned by 'volunteer' pilots."<sup>2</sup> Communist China announced it had 280,000 "volunteers" for Egypt while the Soviets report their "volunteers" were signing up in large numbers. It was also on November 8 that Israel announced she would not allow the U.N. Peace Force on Israeli soil and General E. L. M. Burns arrived in Egypt to discuss Nasser's terms for the U.N. Emergency Force (UNEF).

Early in the day of November 8 the U. S. Atlantic Fleet began to "detect, report, track Soviet or Satellite forces including merchantmen... [using] defensive armament only."<sup>3</sup> As the day wore on, the Canberra shootdown was reported as were the Chinese "volunteers." Four Soviet jet aircraft were reported to be at the airfield at Aleppo, Syria, and Soviet personnel were reportedly training the Syrian air force.<sup>4</sup> A Polish sub was sighted en route to the Med, and a Soviet sub and 4 DDs were reported as coming through the Turkish straits. Finally the order went out to COMIDEASTFOR, "In event that contact attacks, counter attack using every available means to destroy."<sup>5</sup> Then later that day all U. S. Fleets were put on wartime alert.

While Egypt was beginning to clear the canal, Anglo-French troops were still arriving in the area. The Sixth Fleet shifted to an operating area southwest of Crete "in order [to] improve readiness posture for general emergency."<sup>6</sup> Two U.S. carriers were in the eastern end of the Mediterranean.

Great Britain announced on November 9 that she was planning to withdraw some units from Egypt and to redeploy them to Malta and Cyprus, replacing assault units with regular infantry. Egypt noted that she was keeping her military forces on ready status.

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<sup>1</sup> U. S. State Department, "Status of Near East Crisis" memo by S. W. Rockwell (November 7, 1956).

<sup>2</sup> U. S. Navy, #081822 CINCNELM to CNO (November 8, 1956).

<sup>3</sup> U. S. Navy, #081353 COMANTISUBLANT to CTG 80.2 (November 8, 1956).

<sup>4</sup> U. S. Central Intelligence Agency, Memo (November 8, 1956).

<sup>5</sup> U. S. Navy, #081642 CINCNELM to COMIDEASTFOR.

<sup>6</sup> U. S. Navy, #081822 CINCNELM to SECSTATE.



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On November 10 the U. S. S. R. announced that trained Soviet "volunteers" would be sent to join the Egyptian armed forces unless the "aggressors" withdrew from Egyptian territory. Ambassador Bohlen, in Moscow, thought: "propaganda campaign gives no real indication as to any possible Soviet courses of action Middle East question, but in circumstances cease fire it is probable any assistance will not be directed to Egypt but would be more likely Syria, and possibly Jordan and Iraq, with Israel rather than Britain and France as principal target. It may well be Soviet intention support through arms and personnel, guerilla and other action against Israel from Syrian and Jordan borders."<sup>1</sup>

During the next four days tension remained at the same level. Ambassador Bohlen in Moscow reported, "Greek charge told me yesterday that Bulganin and Khrushchev had told Greek mayors here on November 6 that Soviet government 'intended' to ask permission of Greek government to overfly Greek territory for transport volunteers Middle East."<sup>2</sup> The Government of Turkey felt greatly threatened by the Soviets and requested Sixth Fleet material aid. ALUSNA, Ankara, reported Turkish troops were "reportedly placed on condition 1 with all personnel at stations 24 hour basis."<sup>3</sup>

Once again the question of NATO obligations was brought up. With the possibility of Soviet intervention in the Mediterranean heightening, Lord Mountbatten inquired of the CNO just what would be the U. S. obligation under the NATO Treaty should the Soviets attack British or French troops. Admiral Burke thought his reply spoke for itself: "Task Force 26 (with 2 CVAs) is at sea with its ultimate op area dependent upon future circumstances."<sup>4</sup> The U. S. Atlantic Fleet was given this directive: "General situation of heightened international tension requires increased readiness in the Atlantic Fleet. General plan is this fleet will form a carrier force at sea for training operation in order to improve readiness in fleet units involved."<sup>5</sup> Further, COMEASTSEAFRON sent this message: "In view of current international situation CNO and CINCLANTFLT have augmented normal surveillance systems. . . . COMEASTSEAFRON desires that activities be ready for any emergency but no publicity be given to the state of readiness."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> U. S. Department of State, #1157 from Moscow (November 10, 1956).

<sup>2</sup> U. S. Department of State, #1176 from Moscow (November 13, 1956).

<sup>3</sup> U. S. Navy, #141400 ALUSNA, Ankara, to CNO (November 14, 1956).

<sup>4</sup> U. S. Navy, #120229 CNO to CINCNELM REAR for Mountbatten (November 12, 1956).

<sup>5</sup> U. S. Navy, #152240 CINCLANTFLT (November 15, 1956).

<sup>6</sup> U. S. Navy, #131724 COMEASTSEAFRON (November 13, 1956).

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The State Department began a reappraisal of the Middle East situation with a view to both increasing U. S. prestige in that area and to effecting a more permanent settlement of the Arab-Israeli problem. They noted that "There are signs that Israel does not intend to withdraw from Gaza or the islands of Tiran and Sanafir in the Gulf of Aqaba. The Israeli-Jordan-Syrian border remains tense. . . . Western prestige in the Near East has been harmed while that of the U. S. S. R. has risen; the United Kingdom and France are bogged down in a half-completed operation in Egypt; Israel likely will continue adamant, while the Arabs, considering themselves victims of Western-Israeli aggression and rallying round an unchastened Nasser, are in no mood to make concessions; once the United Kingdom and French forces withdraw Nasser will reassume control of the Canal, and the unblocking of the latter will depend upon Egyptian cooperation. In the background is the possibility of renewed hostilities, with or without Soviet instigation. Although we are faced with a critical situation in the Near East for some time to come, we may take hope from the fact that sometimes, in an atmosphere of crisis and basic change, it is possible to achieve solution of problems which otherwise would not be feasible. Also the U. N., which has achieved an increase in stature in this crisis, may be able to play a more useful and constructive role in the future."<sup>1</sup>

The U. N. was moving quickly in the assembling of its force. General Burns went to Cairo to settle with Nasser the terms for entry of UNEF; while at the same time the initial UNEF contingents arrived in Italy. The U. S. Navy was given primary responsibility for the logistics and support of UNEF. On November 14 CINCNELM met with U. N. Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold aboard a Sixth Fleet ship. Mr. Hammarskjold noted that time and the logistics of getting UNEF on station were of critical importance to the political effectiveness of the force. He was relying on the Sixth Fleet as his most necessary instrument of support.<sup>2</sup>

The first contingent of UNEF departed Naples and arrived in Egypt at Abu Suweir airfield on November 15. Other units arrived subsequently and were stationed in Port Said between Egyptian and Anglo-French positions until December 22 when the last British soldier departed. Thereafter, UNEF remained at the Israeli-Egyptian border until 1967 when Nasser requested they pull out.

## Soviet Intentions Are Reassessed

While rumors of Soviet movements continued during the week (and included the message, through intelligence channels, that Soviet forces were mobilizing on the Turkish

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<sup>1</sup> U. S. Department of State, Memo to Hoover from Rountree (November 14, 1956).

<sup>2</sup> U. S. Navy, #131630 CINCNELM to CNO (November 13, 1956).

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border), U.S. Ambassador Bohlen in Moscow was beginning to question whether or not these were based on fact. The British Foreign Office was also becoming skeptical and put out an appreciation of the situation. It would seem valuable to quote the British memorandum in full as it is a good, as well as accurate and sober, summary:

1. Many rumours have appeared in the world press to the effect that material reinforcements are arriving, or are about to arrive, in the Middle East from the Soviet Union. Soviet Government has itself given verisimilitude to these rumours by menacing tone of M. Bulganin's letters of November 5 to Prime Minister, M. Mollet, Mr. Ben Gurion, Mr. Eisenhower and Mr. Nehru, and by Soviet Foreign Ministry's more recent threat to permit Soviet 'volunteers' to go to Egypt if Anglo-French forces are not immediately withdrawn.
2. Most important rumour alleges that Soviet aircraft have arrived in Syria. Others suggest that unidentified aircraft have flown over Eastern Turkey, that Soviet authorities have applied to Turkish Government for passage of ships through the Dardanelles under terms of the Montreaux Convention, and that application has been made to Greek Government for permission for Soviet transport aircraft to stage through Greece. There is no reliable evidence to support any of these rumours.
3. There is also no reliable evidence that fresh supplies of weapons or any 'experts' or 'volunteers' have reached Egypt from Soviet Bloc since cease-fire. It appears that part of Egyptian Air Force was flown out of Egypt for safe-keeping in friendly Arab states during Anglo-French bombing offensive. Movements of these aircraft may account for some of the rumours mentioned above.
4. The Soviet Government may have been disappointed in the relative inactivity of other Arab states while Egypt was under fire. The sequence of events suggests that on November 5, after landings at Port Said, the Soviet and Chinese Governments judged that some vigorous initiative was necessary in order to keep up Egypt's resistance, stimulate Arab/Afro/Asian group to make more pre-emptory demands for cessation of hostilities, and shake Western nerves. Since that date the Soviet Government has continued to mix vague threats to Britain, France and Israel with vague promises of help for Arabs, while demanding that the United Nations should take rapid and effective and, if necessary, forceful steps to secure withdrawal of Anglo-French forces from Egypt. In general, Soviet aims seem to be to encourage Arab and Afro-Asian states to make

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extreme demands on Western powers both inside and outside the U.N., to ensure that credit for any developments which are satisfactory to Arabs can be attributed to Soviet intervention and, while keeping in step with Afro/Asians, to take care not to outstrip Afro-Asian opinion by taking independent action for which there has been no call in the U.N. M. Bulganin's proposal for joint action by U.S. and Soviet forces to curb Anglo-French operations shows that Soviet authorities are well aware of the danger of uni-lateral intervention.

5. It therefore appears that Soviet talk of sending military supplies or volunteers to the Middle East at the present time contains a large element of bluff, although in the long term Bloc will no doubt continue to be a source of arms supplies and other assistance for Colonel Nasser and his friends. Nevertheless, Soviet prestige is heavily committed and Soviet Government's use of bluff has been dangerously extensive. If the situation in the Middle East were to deteriorate and if Arab states were to ask Soviet Government to implement its recent vague promises and threats, it might feel impelled to send urgent material help, or at any rate token significance, to Arabs.

6. In that case the most obvious and least dangerous point of entry for the Soviet Union would be Syria, where Soviet aid would be used against Israel rather than against British and French forces. Rapid assistance for Syria would have to be sent by air, but the number of airfields in Syria suitable for jet aircraft is very limited. In these circumstances rumours of Soviet aid may be more effective than actual consignments.<sup>1</sup>

The French also indicated they were far less concerned about Soviet "volunteer" forces than was Washington. This led the French to take a much firmer stand than the British on UNEF and a Middle East settlement. Pineau insisted that UNEF be allowed to control key points on the Suez Canal until a Palestine settlement was affected. Pineau privately discussed a plan for Syria which the French and, they hoped, the British thought would "solve" many problems. The French had two solutions in mind: 1) make Shishakli (then in Switzerland) head of an autonomous Syria; or, 2) annexation of Syria by Iraq with the inclusion of Jordan (this plan included "territorial concession southern portion Jordan to Israel as well as U.K. and other interested parties guarantees to Israel").<sup>2</sup> This was another attempt by the French and British to impose a 'Syrian settlement' and discussion of the plan continued well into 1957.

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Department of State, #2712 from London (November 15, 1956).

<sup>2</sup>U.S. State Department, #DELGA 99, for Hoover from Lodge (November 15, 1956).

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While the possibility of Soviet intervention continued, Nasser assured the U. S. State Department that he did not want Soviet assistance. Nasser's advisor, Mustafa Amin, visited Robert Murphy and William Rountree on November 18 in Washington. There he assured them that "Nasser has not given the Soviets any promise concerning base rights in Egypt and has not yielded to repeated Soviet urging that he request Soviet volunteers. He has made a personal and direct request for aid in connection with the attack on Egypt only to the U. S." Amin noted that Nasser was grateful for what the U. S. had done in the U. N. on behalf of Egypt. He also stated that "Nasser wanted the U. S. Government to know that the British and French are finished commercially and industrially in the Middle East and that he hoped the U. S. would hurry to fill this vacuum in commerce and industry."<sup>1</sup>

The Navy, realizing the opportunity for increased American influence in the Middle East, began to study some military and political measures to that end. A conclusion was that there "should be a more aggressive U. S. political offensive in that area. It is interesting to note the apparent rise of Soviet prestige simply by one threatening note. The U. S., British and French policies in that area have been divergent for some time. We opposed their going into the Suez Canal by force. It would appear that we might logically proceed with a U. S. policy of economic aid and political measures in those areas that are anti-colonial and perhaps contrary to British and French colonial concepts."<sup>2</sup>

On November 15, 1956, Washington again "stressed" that invading forces must leave Egyptian soil. Moscow was warned again against sending "volunteers" to the Middle East. In Egypt the ceasefire remained an uneasy one with intermittent firing. The French and British were very reluctant to withdraw until a strong U. N. Force was well established in Egypt. Israeli intentions were still unclear. The possibility of Soviet intervention remained. A number of other problems were being discussed in the State Department: Western European oil supplies, British financial problems, and the danger that if Jordan severed relations with Britain she would lose her subsidy and be open to Soviet backing.<sup>3</sup>

With regard to oil supplies, the denial of Arab oil was beginning to be felt in Britain and France. They requested emergency supplies from the U. S. President Eisenhower, having been handed this powerful lever, announced that no emergency oil supplies would

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<sup>1</sup> U. S. State Department, Memo of Conversation, Amin, Murphy, Rountree, Hussein, Hoffacker (November 18, 1956).

<sup>2</sup> U. S. Navy, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Memorandum: "U. S. Courses of Action in the Middle East" (November 15, 1956).

<sup>3</sup> U. S. State Department, Memorandum: "Status of Near East Crisis" (November 20, 1956).

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be sent until after the French and British evacuated. The pressure was felt soon enough and on November 30 Eisenhower said that he was satisfied with British and French plans to withdraw rapidly and unconditionally. The emergency oil lift began.

## The Crisis Winds Down

From here on the crisis diminished. On December 3 Lloyd announced in the House of Commons that the allied forces would soon withdraw from Port Said (Prime Minister Eden had gone to Jamaica November 19 on sick leave). That same day, December 3, Israel drew back thirty miles from the Canal. By January 7 Israel had withdrawn from half of Sinai. Two weeks later Ben Gurion declared Israel would keep Gaza. However, with a sixth U.N. resolution demanding Israel's immediate withdrawal and, more importantly, with vigorous pressure from Eisenhower, the Israelis did finally evacuate all their conquered territory on March 6.

The Anglo-French withdrawal from Egypt had been completed on December 22. On January 9 Prime Minister Eden resigned for reasons of health and Harold MacMillan became Prime Minister, primarily because he was the candidate most able to redeem the Anglo-American alliance. On March 29 the first convoy went through a newly opened Suez Canal.

For the purposes of this paper the end of the Suez Crisis would be December 13, 1956 -- the day CINCNELM returned to his London headquarters. The threat of renewed hostilities seemed over and normal operations could safely be resumed.

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## THE ROLE OF THE SIXTH FLEET

In the last six months of 1956, Sixth Fleet activity reflected the confusion in Washington over Suez. Threats to American interests were perceived in almost every Near Eastern country at some point. Sixth Fleet was put on alert and on a war footing with no clear indication of what to expect or who the enemy would be. Throughout the period, it can be said that the Fleet was at one point aiding, and at another opposing, every party to the dispute. Requests for Sixth Fleet aid came from at least six countries. During the actual hostilities, the enemies were our NATO allies and our only "ally" was the Soviet Union. It was not until November 6, when hostilities had virtually ended, that the Soviet Union became a credible threat to metropolitan France and Great Britain as well as to their forces in the eastern Mediterranean. Bound by the NATO alliance, Eisenhower directed all forces to maintain a readiness to implement emergency war plans.

The role played by Sixth Fleet changed almost daily during the crisis. Its first obligation was the protection of U.S. citizens and investments. Secondly, the Fleet, unintentionally but successfully, delayed the Franco-British invasion of Egypt. Finally, the Sixth Fleet was alerted to deter Soviet intervention in the Near East. It performed other functions such as: evacuation of foreign nationals; augmentation, and in some cases replacement, of State communications facilities; and aid to U.N. forces.

### OPERATIONS DURING THE CRISIS

In June a task force was sent through the Suez Canal, but was halted by Egyptian authorities. For the first time, the Egyptians requested the ships' captains to divulge information about the convoy which was considered classified. The information was refused, and the Egyptian authorities referred to a rule of passage which would allow them on board for a medical inspection and thereby enable them to collect the information they requested. A formal complaint was issued. Sixth Fleet ships were then assigned two pilots from Yugoslavia who came aboard and remained with the task force half-way down the Canal.

Because of tensions in the Middle East, on July 7 the Fleet was put on a 24-hour alert for possible movement to the Eastern Mediterranean. It returned to normal operations on July 22 -- just four days before Nasser nationalized the Canal. During August, the Fleet moved to the Eastern Mediterranean but was not put on alert. Unscheduled moves were made periodically, but this was part of the CNO's plan to keep the littoral states aware of the Fleet's presence and to allay fears of perceived threats when the Fleet was to move as a result of any crisis situation.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Burke interview (July 3, 1969).

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During the month of September the Fleet dispersed as a result of perceived threats in various locations. The State Department feared that the Soviets wanted to gain a foothold in the Near East with Wheelus Field, Habbaniya in Iraq, and oil supplies as its targets. This was followed by a perceived threat to the Iranian Government. CINCNELM was directed to prepare an emergency plan for deployment of U.S. forces to Iran to support the non-Communist Government. Next, there was an estimate that Iraq might move into Syria and possibly Jordan. A threat to U.S. nationals and oil interests in Saudi Arabia seemed to be increasing. At this point, Admiral Brown (COMSIXTHFLT) was told Saudi Arabia might require the rapid deployment of U.S. forces for protection of U.S. nationals, interests and installations in Dhahran.<sup>1</sup> Two U.S. warships transited the Canal in spite of Egyptian interference and the Seventh Fleet was alerted.<sup>2</sup> In October the Syrian Government still seemed to be in trouble. Then the center of attention moved to Libya when the British thought Nasser was conspiring to assassinate the king.<sup>3</sup> In fact, Nasser was moving his armor to the western desert in an effort to save it if the Israelis attacked from the east.<sup>4</sup> CNO deployed a sixth DESDIV in the Atlantic Fleet.

By late October Sixth Fleet had DD's patrolling North African and Levantine shores. It was on alert to be ready for evacuation of U.S. nationals from almost every Near Eastern country within 24 hours. The intelligence estimates were pointing to an invasion of Libya by Egypt and of Jordan by Israel. U.S. Marine reinforcements arrived at Izmir, Turkey. However, the main body of the Fleet continued exercise Beehive in the Ionian Sea. The Fleet was placed on alert October 28. Redeployments, required SitReps, and the setting of maximum readiness did not occur until October 29 -- the day hostilities broke out.

The first active role of Sixth Fleet in the crisis was evacuation. Sixth Fleet responded quickly and deployed two evacuation task groups -- one for Haifa and one for Alexandria:

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<sup>1</sup> Burke interview (July 3, 1969).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Navy, #300250 ALUSNA, Cairo, to CINCNELM (October 30, 1956).

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## TF-61

Haifa Task Group  
Cdr. Frederick L. Edwards, Jr.

1 high-speed transport  
(APD 33) Burdo

2 destroyers

(DD 708) Harlan R. Dickson  
(DD 709) Hugh A. Purvis

## TF-62

Alexandria Task Group  
Capt. Frederick W. Laing

1 attack cargo ship  
(AKA 19) Thuban

1 attack transport  
(APA 38) Chilton

1 dock landing ship  
(LSD 30) Ft. Snelling

2 destroyers  
(DD)

The only role played during the next two days (October 29-31) was evacuation and protection of evacuees. CINCLANTFLT was ordered to prepare one BLT for possible early deployment to augment Sixth Fleet. Most of the Fleet was in Soudha Bay while some ships were on their way from Naples. Chilton, Ft. Snelling, Thuban and Burdo were operating south of Cyprus awaiting evacuation requests from Ambassador Hare in Egypt.

It was expected that U.S. Ambassador Hare could get Americans out of Egypt by air. He commandeered TWA aircraft for evacuation from Cairo and one commercial vessel (American Export Exochorda) in Alexandria. However, as the busloads of evacuees arrived at Cairo International, Nasser closed the airport. Ambassador Hare was not informed of the availability of Sixth Fleet ships<sup>1</sup> although he made every effort to have Egyptian authorities grant port clearances for them just in case. Reaction of Sixth Fleet to Ambassador Hare's request was prompt. However, communication between the Fleet, Cairo, and Alexandria did not work well and none knew what the other was doing.

The Cairo evacuees returned from the airport to their homes. The State Department endeavored to have the airport reopened. In Alexandria, Consul General Washburn was told by Cairo to find places on ships near Alexandria harbor. The Exochorda was able to take 295 evacuees of the Alexandria district. Of the expected 2000 evacuees from Cairo only 875 could have found places, and those on Greek ships. Ultimately, fewer than 60 Americans would have been able to leave because the Greek ships had been under charter to the German government and Egypt would not let them in the harbor. Both Hare

<sup>1</sup>Bar Washburn, Report on Evacuation (December, 1956).

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and Washburn were unable to arrange for an evacuation without knowledge of Sixth Fleet intentions. And the Fleet could not know how many evacuees to expect because other nationals would find the Fleet their only means of evacuation. On October 30, support of TF 61/62 could have been in Alexandria; however, it had no clearance.

Although no diplomatic clearance had been received,<sup>1</sup> Captain Laing obtained permission from the local port authority to enter Alexandria and established voice contact with Washburn. This was a fortunate turn of events, for Washburn did not yet know that he would be unable to use commercial means as directed and that the evacuees from Cairo whom he was expecting momentarily had no intention of coming and were awaiting an airlift.

Captain Laing feared Americans and others were being held hostages in Cairo. He ordered preparations for the Marines to storm ashore and advance to Cairo to retrieve them, using force as required to meet the situation. Carrier aircraft were deployed as protective cover.<sup>2</sup> Fortunately State representatives were able to establish that the Marine landing was not necessary.<sup>3</sup>

Washburn boarded the newly arrived Chilton at 9 a. m. to arrange the evacuation. By noon, it was apparent to Ambassador Hare that the airport would not be reopened, and at 1:30 on Wednesday October 31 the first automobile convoy left Cairo and Washburn was warned of the arrival of evacuees he had expected the night before. Whereas Captain Laing and Washburn had expected to load the evacuees that afternoon it was impossible until the next day. This meant it was necessary to build a "tent city" in the desert for accommodation. It also meant embarkation would occur during air attacks. Furthermore, harbor clearance had only been granted for the day of October 31.

Although CINCNELM had arranged, and Captain Laing had been assured of, British avoidance of targets near departing Americans, there was bombing both near the automobile convoys and Alexandria. Aircraft were attacking Dukhaylah airfield and other military installations in the immediate vicinity of the harbor. Two Egyptian naval vessels returned fire on the aircraft from positions amidst the American ships.<sup>4</sup> Many times throughout the two-day loading period the port seemed "blanketed by flak." This interrupted the evacuation operations and increased the hazards.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> U. S. Navy, COMSIXTHFLT to CNO, The History of the Sixth Fleet, OPNAV Report 5750-5.

<sup>3</sup> William B. Garrett, "The U. S. Navy's Role in the 1956 Suez Crisis," Naval War College Review (March, 1970), p. 70.

<sup>4</sup> Garrett, op. cit., p. 71.

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Sixth Fleet had been authorized to take "friendly nationals" on a space-available basis. The Egyptians refused to grant permission for British or French to leave -- except those with a U.N. pass. Eight Hungarians arrived at the dock. Just after all evacuees were loaded, 100 Germans -- who earlier had maintained they could take care of themselves -- arrived ready for departure on Chilton.

The next delay was the result of a rumor initiated by Egyptian Admiral Ezzat. He maintained that a British plane had been shot down and in the wreckage were documents indicating Alexandria harbor had been mined. Admiral Ezzat amplified by "assuring" the Americans that the British Ambassador had confirmed this report. The Egyptians stuck to their story all day and refused to sweep the channel. Washburn reported that Captain Laing sent a curt message to Ezzat: "charged as I am with the safety of over 1000 women and children, I consider that refusal to sweep Greek Pass Channel is a most unfriendly personal gesture toward me." "It was and still is the considered opinion of the officers of the Consulate General that the Egyptian Navy hoped to keep the American ships in port another night thus assuring themselves of another twenty-four hours of immunity from the expected stepped-up air attacks."<sup>1</sup>

As Washburn was trying to establish the facts and get a minesweeper his telephone was cut off and he never got word of the British denial. Ezzat maintained he could not sweep because he did not know the type or position of the mines. Finally, the ships left by the Boghaz Pass as an Egyptian minesweeper raced out to head the convoy.

As a result of communications breakdowns, Cairo, Alexandria, and Captain Laing were all unaware of each other's situations. Since Embassy Cairo's messages went first to State, then to CINCNELM, and on to Captain Laing, there arose some difficulty in arrangements. One result was that Captain Laing entered Alexandria harbor without diplomatic clearance -- expecting to evacuate nationals who still had no intention of leaving Cairo.

When a second evacuation of Egypt seemed likely (November 6) COMSIXTHFLT drew up a new plan. Informed that Egyptians had mined Alexandria harbor, CNO directed COMSIXTHFLT to enter only with Egyptian pilots.<sup>2</sup> Admiral Brown, however, asked him to reconsider: "Having once had the prospect brought sharply home to me, I feel the possibility of damage while entering the port plus the danger of getting ships locked

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<sup>1</sup> Washburn, op. cit., pp. 10 and 24.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Navy, #080155 CNO to COMSIXTHFLT (November 8, 1956).

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up there for an indefinite period once they have entered it makes it preferable to carry out any future evacuation over the beaches. "<sup>1</sup>

An estimated 2500 possible American and foreign evacuees were in Israel. Of these, 772 were evacuated by November 3, 540 by air and 232 by sea. Air evacuation started October 30 but incurred several interruptions. The Haifa task group was amidst fighting ships of the Egyptian, French, and Israeli navies and was delayed by the action in the harbor. On November 1, Burdo was forced to interrupt loading after 120 evacuees were embarked, and stand outside the harbor. When Haifa was in blackout against expected Egyptian air raids, Dickson entered to embark the remaining 46 U.S. and foreign nationals. The passengers were loaded quickly and the task group steamed away. This freed 1 CA and 2 DD's from support. The evacuees arrived in Soudha Bay, Crete, on November 2 and were transferred to the USNS General Alexander M. Patch (T-AP-122) and taken on to Naples.

Although the air evacuation from Israel was fast, it was not smooth. CINCNELM did not have exact figures on evacuees. While Athens expected 1100, only 772 arrived.<sup>2</sup> In addition there were many stragglers. Each time CINCNELM reported "evacuation complete," more would come forth expecting to be picked up. The airlift "terminated" each day and resumed the next until November 4.

Throughout the Suez War there were incidents between Sixth Fleet and the Anglo-French armada. Rumors spread that the Americans were, as a matter of policy, obstructing the landing. Many British and French Naval officers felt threatened by Sixth Fleet, while others heard that "the U. S. is with us." The 130 warships of the Franco-British armada steaming toward Egypt ran into the same operating area as the 50 American vessels in the Eastern Mediterranean. Sixth Fleet officers themselves had no idea to what extent they should go in either protecting or obstructing other navies.

While helping to evacuate Americans from Alexandria, ships of Sixth Fleet were standing in the middle of the British carrier zone. Vice Admiral Dunford-Slater signalled Brown asking him to move, saying, "you are interfering with my mission." Brown replied, "I also have a mission" and refused to move. However, he wasn't sure what that mission was and cabled back to Washington: "whose side am I on?"<sup>3</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup>U.S. Navy, #081120 COMSIXTHFLT to CINCNELM (November 8, 1956).

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Navy, #010126 CINCNELM rear to CNO (November 1, 1956).

<sup>3</sup>Thomas, op. cit., p. 141.

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CNO (himself undecided as was Dulles) answered, "keep clear of foreign op areas but take no guff from anybody."<sup>1</sup>

About the first of November, Dulles realized Sixth Fleet was in a position to actively obstruct the invasion. There ensued a disagreement in Washington: Burke wanted to aid the British and French -- maintaining they still needed landing craft; the Joint Chiefs recommended that the U.S. be a kindly observer, but not get in the way of the British; Dulles wanted to stop the invasion by any means available short of shooting at them. The Secretary asked Burke if we could stop them. Burke replied, "Mr. Secretary, there is only one way to stop them. But we will blast the hell out of them." Dulles asked "Well, can't you stop them some other way?" Burke answered "No. If we're going to threaten, if we're going to turn on them, then you've got to be ready to shoot. I can't give these people orders...demand and then get laughed at. The only way you can stop them is to shoot. And we can do that. We can defeat them -- the British and the French and the Egyptians and the Israelis -- the whole goddam works of them we can knock off, if you want. But that's the only way to do it." News of Dulles' consideration crept into the press, and the next day Joseph and Stewart Alsop wrote: "this city, which has seen a good many extremes in political behavior, has never witnessed such an exhibition of pique and anger as the Anglo-French-Israeli action against Egypt has touched off. At one moment, the highest American policy-makers actually played with the astonishing idea of ordering the American Sixth Fleet to oppose the Anglo-French landings on the Egyptian coast."<sup>2</sup> As the disagreement continued in Washington, Sixth Fleet was ordered to remain near Egypt and to be prepared for any eventuality. Burke cabled Brown "to be prepared for anything, to have his bombs up, to be ready to fight either another naval force or against land targets...to be prepared for any war eventuality.... (I didn't know who the damned enemy was because we were still having this discussion.)"<sup>3</sup> So the Fleet remained -- still with no clearly defined role.

However, in London, Ambassador Aldrich found his most pressing task communicating with the Admiralty and CINCNELM in order to keep each advised of the other's movements. He succeeded in persuading the British to delay their bombing, and he managed to prevent mishaps.<sup>4</sup> Prime Minister Eden later said, "I've never seen a shred of evidence that the Sixth Fleet interfered. I've heard it said, but I know of no evidence."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Navy, #020615 CNO to COMSIXTHFLT (November 2, 1956).

<sup>2</sup> New York Herald Tribune (November 2, 1956).

<sup>3</sup> Burke interview (July 3, 1969).

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Winthrop Aldrich (November 12, 1969).

<sup>5</sup> Love, op. cit., p. 616.

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Pineau added, "there were definite contacts with American admirals to keep the Sixth Fleet from running afoul of our movements."<sup>1</sup> General Keightly agreed: "anxiety was caused by the activities of the U. S. Sixth Fleet which, since October 31, had been moved to and stationed in the same operating areas as our own carriers in order to provide protection for the evacuation of U. S. nationals from Alexandria and the Levant. Despite the very real difficulties created by this situation and the great inconvenience experienced by our forces, thanks to the good sense of the two naval commanders both were able to carry out their functions efficiently and without incident."<sup>2</sup>

The Sixth Fleet took a great many precautions "to avoid mistaken identity or other misadventures."<sup>3</sup> After the French complained of not being able to identify American ships in areas of hostility, COMSIXTHFLT complied with their request and ordered all his ships to "display a large ensign during the day and illuminate both ship and ensign at night."<sup>4</sup> This proved advantageous to the British and French. It didn't take them long to discover that with their lights on as well,<sup>5</sup> the Egyptian bombers would be unable to differentiate between U. S. and other ships.

Incidents were bound to occur, and they did with regularity -- some of them comical, others very dangerous. The Sixth Fleet first became involved in hostilities while evacuating Americans from Haifa on October 31. As Burdo moved into the harbor, the French cruiser Kersaint began firing on an Egyptian destroyer, Ibrahim el Awal. According to the New York Times the Egyptians had hoped their ship would be mistaken for the American destroyer Dickson, which was due in Haifa. Indeed, the Israelis were fooled and allowed the Ibrahim el Awal to approach Haifa thinking she was part of the Sixth Fleet task group.<sup>6</sup> The Israelis sailed up to finish off the Egyptian cruiser and spotted several ships in the area of the target. The Israeli commander signalled for identification and got the reply "American." He flashed "am opening fire on enemy ship please keep away." Dickson politely got out of the way and anchored outside Haifa harbor "to permit IDF receive full glory" unless others would think Sixth Fleet supported any combatant.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 472.

<sup>2</sup> Love, op. cit., p. 616.

<sup>3</sup> U. S. Navy, #020613, CNO to COMSIXTHFLT (November 2, 1956).

<sup>4</sup> U. S. Navy, #010126 CINCNELM rear to CNO (Sitrep 6, November 1, 1956).

<sup>5</sup> Thomas, op. cit., p. 141.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Henriques, A Hundred Hours to Suez (New York: The Viking Press, 1957), p. 169.

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Sixth Fleet submarines Cutlass and Hardhead maintained a watch on the Anglo-French armada as it steamed toward Egypt. The British convoy with carriers HMS Theseus and HMS Ocean found "it was under close observation from all the august might of the U.S. Sixth Fleet which appeared to be steaming on a parallel course and shadowing the British ships. A submarine [Hardhead] was detected by one of the destroyers which promptly moved in attack. As it did so the sub hastily hoisted a U.S. flag before sailing on the surface down the middle of the convoy. The headquarters ship HMS Meon signalled: 'Why don't you come join us' to which the reply came: 'No thanks, we're holding your coat this time.'"<sup>1</sup>

On the night of November 4, the main force of Sixth Fleet passed across the French naval forces from west to east. Air interceptions occurred often between British and U.S. carrier aircraft operating between Cyprus and Egypt. Admiral Grantham asked Sixth Fleet forces to move outside that general area. COMSIXTHFLT said he could withdraw his carriers and submarines northwest of that line and still furnish adequate cover. He did so, and Grantham guaranteed safe conduct to evacuation vessels. Toward the end of hostilities relations became quite friendly between the U.S. and Anglo-French fleets to the point where November 6 found HMS Wizard apologizing for being in the way of Sixth Fleet operations.

However, rumors of Sixth Fleet interference spread in an exaggerated form until Admiral Brown was forced to publicly put them down. He said, "I categorically deny reports that units of the Sixth Fleet were deliberately maneuvered in any fashion to embarrass those British and French units. My task was to evacuate U.S. nationals from the combat area. I did it. In order to do so properly, it was necessary for me to dispose my forces in such a way as to best defend the ships and aircraft engaged in actual evacuation duties from attack or other mishap. Both Admiral Sir Guy Grantham and I recognized that there existed a risk of embarrassment and polite signals on the subject were exchanged."<sup>2</sup>

## AID TO THE U.N.

Another role of Sixth Fleet was to aid United Nations representatives. The Fleet was the only means of support for both the U.N. Supervisory Truce Organization (UNTSO) and the subsequent United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF). On October 31, the UNTSO personnel in Gaza requested USARMA, Israel, to have Sixth Fleet stand by in the event of hostilities in Gaza. By dawn the next day CTG 60.3 had 3 destroyers standing off Gaza

<sup>1</sup>Barker, op. cit., pp. 90-91.

<sup>2</sup>Charles Brown, "When Trouble Came in the Mediterranean: The Story of the Sixth Fleet in Action," U.S. News and World Report (December 14, 1956), p. 30.



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and an APA on the way. Orders were prepared for an assault landing if necessary.<sup>1</sup> At dawn on November 2 Cambria went into Gaza and evacuated 21 U.N. observers over the beach, following plans first drawn up during December, 1955. The U.S. Task Group remained off shore while 7 remaining UNTSO personnel coaxed the Egyptians into surrender. The UNTSO head in Gaza, Lt. Col. Bayard, said later, "the presence of a U.S. force at Gaza gave [him] a stronger hand in dealings with Egyptians which in [his] opinion prevented the loss of lives of many refugees and may have influenced more speedy military implementation of the surrender."<sup>2</sup> The Egyptians felt that the presence of U.N. representatives would insure them better treatment as POWs, and Bayard's threat to have the waiting Sixth Fleet ships return for him caused the Egyptians to turn themselves over. He also threatened the Israelis who had begun to destroy U.N. headquarters and communications equipment. They stopped at the prospect of U.S. marines coming ashore. The presence of Sixth Fleet enabled the U.N. team to remain in Gaza and insured their ability to mediate and bring about a speedy surrender. The full truce team was returned to shore on November 3 by Cambria. General Burns, chairman of UNTSO, thanked Sixth Fleet for its assistance and said that without it the reestablishment of UNTSO and UNWRA in Gaza would have been more difficult.<sup>3</sup>

After the ceasefire, Sixth Fleet enabled the U.N. to establish itself in Egypt. Contingents of UNEF forces began arriving at Soudha Bay on November 8. Two U.S. Marine battalions disembarked with their equipment, vehicles, and cargo to make room for 4000 U.N. troops.<sup>4</sup> On November 14, CINCNELM met with Hammarskjold to plan the transfer and support of UNEF. The U.S. Navy was given primary responsibility for logistics and support. Rear Admiral Clarence Ekstrom, Commander, U.S. Naval Activities, Mediterranean, was the officer made responsible. General Burns met with Ekstrom, Admiral Brown and Admiral Boone (CINCNELM) in Naples on November 21. Burns later reported, "The [U.S.] staff officers had produced a memorandum setting forth the principles and general arrangements under which the U.S. logistic support for UNEF would be provided. The function of the U.S. Navy Support Activity Command was to help NATO allies in this region with equipment, munitions, and further to reinforce their military power. The command was thus well adapted to look after the wants of UNEF. Their proposals were quickly agreed upon. The U.N. naval officers of the Support Activity Command were extremely helpful to UNEF and seemed anxious to meet all our demands."<sup>5</sup> The success of UNEF depended upon the speed of its arrival in Egypt because France and Britain intended to keep their troops there until UNEF arrived.

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<sup>1</sup>U.S. Marine Corps, First Provisional Marine Force, Chronological Record of Events During Tour of Duty in the Mediterranean.

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Navy, #040805 COMSIXTHFLT to CINCNELM (November 4, 1956).

<sup>3</sup>U.S. Navy, #061150 AMCONGEN, Jerusalem, to CNO (November 6, 1956).

<sup>4</sup>U.S. Navy, #071716 COMSIXTHFLT to CTF 61 (November 7, 1956).

<sup>5</sup>E. L. M. Burns, Between Arab and Israeli (New York: Ivan Obolensky, Inc., 1962), p. 219.

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## ROLE DURING THREAT OF SOVIET ACTION

On November 5, the Soviet Union threatened Britain, France, and Israel. The Russians also began recruiting "volunteers" to send to Egypt, and Ambassador Bohlen in Moscow advised that Soviet preparations appeared to be genuine. Washington received intelligence that the Soviets were arriving in Egypt carrying "special" weapons. Soviet troops were massing on the Turkish border. At a luncheon meeting of the National Security Council, Admiral Radford advocated putting U.S. strike forces on alert.<sup>1</sup> Eisenhower said, "if those fellows start something, we may have to hit them -- and, if necessary with everything in the bucket."<sup>2</sup> Sixth Fleet was placed in readiness to implement emergency war plans.

CNO's estimate of Soviet intentions was close to the mark: "It is our present estimate USSR (a) will almost certainly not attack metropolitan U.K. or France; (b) will probably not employ Soviet forces on a large scale in the Eastern Mediterranean; (c) may make small-scale attacks by air or submarine against U.K. and French forces in the Eastern Mediterranean; (d) will continue to furnish military aid in the form of material, technicians, and logistics to Egypt -- they will probably send volunteers."<sup>3</sup>

Anthony Eden found the prospect of a Soviet attack horrifying and both he and Mollet worried whether the NATO alliance extended to forces in the eastern Mediterranean. Washington was put in a tough position. Whereas Eisenhower wanted to make it difficult for the British and French until they withdrew from Egypt, he had no desire to encourage the Soviets. He therefore made U.S. obligations to the Anglo-French leaders seem questionable while his orders to the Navy were explicit and showed there was no doubt the U.S. would respond to any Soviet move. When Eden and Mollet asked Washington to confirm the U.S. nuclear guarantee, they were shattered by the ambiguity of the reply: "The Government of the United States will respect its obligations under NATO arrangements."<sup>4</sup> The implication was that the U.S. would respond only if there was an attack on metropolitan France or Great Britain. It was not until the Anglo-French leaders agreed to a ceasefire that, through the inquiries of staff officials, the U.S. acknowledged that "if Soviets should intervene directly against British and French troops, NATO obligations would come into play."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Murphy, op. cit., p. 83.

<sup>2</sup> Eisenhower, op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Navy, #062103 CNO to all (November 6, 1956).

<sup>4</sup> Robertson, op. cit., p. 253.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. State Department, Memo of Conversation (Alphand, Murphy, November 5, 1956).

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The Navy estimated Soviet capabilities as follows: "If USSR should carry out threats of armed intervention in Egypt, it could use warships and aircraft it maintains in Black Sea area for initial attacks. These warships consist of 2 OBB, 2 CA, 6 CL and 52 destroyers and escort types. Under Montreux Convention, Soviets must warn Turks of passage. Soviets have about 2000 jet fighters and about 500 jet bombers located in areas on or near Black Sea. Bull, Badger, Bison and Bear aircraft based western USSR could cover entire Mediterranean area."<sup>1</sup>

The next day, November 7, the Soviets requested permission for 6 warships (including at least 1 cruiser and 3 destroyers) to transit the straits from the Black Sea. There were intelligence reports of unidentified jet aircraft overflying Turkey. Sixth Fleet spotted several "possibly hostile" submarines in the Mediterranean. And there were rumors of Russian frogmen in Alexandria harbor.

CNO issued the following instructions:

- a. Deploy submarines on reconnaissance patrols for surveillance of possible Soviet naval movements.
- b. Augment radar picket ships of Atlantic Barrier.
- c. Direct all CINCLANTFLT HUK groups to operate in ocean approaches to CONUS; direct all CINCPAC HUK groups to operate at sea.
- d. Alert SOSUS system and augment VP backup.
- e. JCS desire to increase strength Mideast forces:
  - (1) Prepare to sail carrier task force earliest from CONUS to WESTPAC composed of 2 CVA, 1 CA and 1 DESDIV.
  - (2) When forces (1) above ordered to deploy, sail carrier task force same composition from WESTPAC to chop CINCNELM in MIDEASTFOR area.
  - (3) Sail TF 26 (2 CVAs) toward Azores.
  - (4) Sail 1 AD to Persian Gulf.

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<sup>1</sup>U.S. Navy. #062125 CNO to all (November 6, 1956).

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- f. Maintain readiness to execute emergency war plans.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the most frightening news was the report of a British Canberra shot down by a Soviet Mig over Syria on November 8. The Sixth Fleet shifted its operating area southwest of Crete "in order to improve its readiness posture for a general emergency."<sup>2</sup> CINCNELM sent the following message to COMSIXTHFLT: "During present critical situation while NELM forces are operating in waters where unfriendly foreign subs may take hostile action against unidentified surface vessels or aircraft... in event that contact attack, counterattack using every available means to destroy."<sup>3</sup> CNO advised that "the possibility of a new outbreak of hostilities should not be discounted."<sup>4</sup>

Reported sighting of Soviet ships and planes occurred until November 15. Sixth Fleet continued to sight unidentified submarines. Soviet jet aircraft were reported at Aleppo, Syria. Rumors spread about great shipments of Russian arms to Syria and of Soviets training a growing Syrian Air Force. The government of Iraq was reported to be extremely shaky. The Turks were terrified of a Soviet-backed Syrian attack on Turkey and/or Lebanon. Some of the intelligence turned out to be false. In fact, the British Canberra was shot down by a Meteor at 4500 ft., not by a Soviet Mig at 45,000 ft. The Soviet planes overflying Turkey and landing in Syria were bringing back Syria's President Kuwatley and party from a brief trip to Russia. Soviet ship movements in the Black Sea were part of the annual October Revolution demonstrations. However, Soviet troop movements in the Caucasus and other indicators of general war alerts could not be explained away. On November 15, the Soviet threat seemed to dissipate and by November 21 there was a Sixth Fleet port call at Beirut. The winding-down was slow, however, and Sixth Fleet did not go off 24-hour alert until December 13, when CINCNELM returned to London.

The movements of Sixth Fleet contributed to the political credibility of the U. S. position in the crisis. In Washington, some thought that had the Sixth Fleet supported Nasser, its reason for being would have changed from protection of the southern flank of NATO to the security of Africa and the northern tier. Opposition to Israel would have meant a complete change in the structure of the Near East. One result could have been

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<sup>1</sup> U. S. Navy, #070451 CNO to CINCLANTFLT and #070459 CNO to CINCPACFLT (November 7, 1956).

<sup>2</sup> U. S. Navy, #081822 CINCNELM to CNO (November 8, 1956).

<sup>3</sup> U. S. Navy, #081642 CINCNELM to COMSIXTHFLT (November 8, 1956).

<sup>4</sup> U. S. Navy, #072135 CNO to all (November 7, 1956).

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Israeli invasion and occupation of the West Bank of Jordan, a possible invasion of that kingdom by Iraq, and the almost certain entrance of Soviet troops into Syria.

Rear Admiral H. E. Eccles pointed out the lessons of Suez which were subsequently reflected in U.S. policy and behavior:<sup>1</sup>

- a. strengthening of the General Purpose Forces and establishment of a stronger ready amphibious force and improved mobile logistic support;
- b. formation of the U.S. Strike Command;
- c. the formal concept of prepositioning;
- d. the establishment of a Special Assistant for Strategic Mobility to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff;
- e. a more specific approach to the evaluation of operational readiness;
- f. the great care that was taken to inform our allies of the situation and our position in the Cuban missile crisis of 1962.

Admiral Burke pointed out that during Suez he was still able to move a fleet on his own and tell the President later. Sixth Fleet was able to operate efficiently and to complete its mission quickly largely as a result of decisions made on the scene. As one British officer quipped at Suez: "Nelson would never have accomplished anything had there been a Telex." During Suez "each situation had the definite possibility of resulting in a serious and even tragic event if it had not been completely controlled by the Naval officer at the scene."<sup>2</sup> Admiral Dudley's HUK group departed Rotterdam without orders. Captain Laing fortunately entered Alexandria harbor without clearance. The Haifa Task Group accomplished its mission avoiding hostilities.

## REQUESTS FOR SIXTH FLEET HELP DURING THE WAR

The Sixth Fleet found itself in great demand throughout the Suez War. On October 31, Nasser called in Ambassador Hare and asked that the U.S. protect Egypt militarily from the Anglo-French invasion force. Nasser was informed that Sixth Fleet help would not be forthcoming as the U.S. preferred to oppose the landing through the U.N. One week later and after the Anglo-French ceasefire, Ali Sabri approached the U.S. and pleaded

<sup>1</sup> H. E. Eccles, USN, "Suez 1956 -- Some Military Lessons," Naval War College Review (March, 1969), p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Garrett, op. cit., p. 75.



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for the immediate dispatch of Sixth Fleet as the only hope to forestall Soviet volunteers. Ambassador Hare added, "consider significant fact that this message repeated an urgent request for Sixth Fleet intervention."<sup>1</sup>

On November 5, the Soviet Union proposed to Eisenhower that Sixth Fleet and the Soviet navy join in a cooperative effort to stop the Suez War. Ambassador Bohlen who received the message said, "I couldn't believe my eyes. I looked at Shepilov and said: 'Are you kidding?' He said 'No.' 'This is a serious proposal.' I said I'd send it but the answer would surely be no."<sup>2</sup> The answer, very definitely, was "no."

In addition to Sixth Fleet's evacuation of nationals of 31 countries, it was called upon to escort a chartered evacuation ship from Germany. The Greek government inquired how Greece was to be protected if Sixth Fleet moved out of the eastern Mediterranean during the Anglo-French expedition to Egypt. Turkey, feeling a great Soviet threat, asked for Sixth Fleet protection and material aid. The French felt that because of the political situation in mid-November, they were unable to provide external security at Pt. Lyautey and asked that Sixth Fleet provide it instead. Finally, Nehru sent a petition to President Eisenhower proposing that "the U. S. Sixth Fleet be sent to Port Said at once to enforce, as the vanguard of a U. N. force, the ceasefire resolutions."<sup>3</sup> Nasser said he would allow U. S. Marines to land.

Sixth Fleet played an important role in the Suez War by delaying the Franco-British invasion, dissuading Soviet entry, and enabling the U. N. to move in quickly. Admiral Brown noted, "the U. S. Navy was one of the few survivors of the conflict which emerged with its reputation not only intact, but enhanced."<sup>4</sup> Sixth Fleet enjoyed its greatest popularity since 1948.

## COMMUNICATIONS

During the crisis period there were communications problems. The Sixth Fleet was the only group in touch with all the parties involved. It was in communication with all the other navies, with governments of the littoral states, and with U. S. representatives ashore -- both as a matter of course and as a much-needed go-between where others'

<sup>1</sup> U. S. State Department, #1350 from Cairo (November 6, 1956).

<sup>2</sup> Love, op. cit., p. 614.

<sup>3</sup> Robertson, op. cit., p. 263.

<sup>4</sup> Garrett, op. cit., p. 75.

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communications systems failed. Even the Sixth Fleet was not always sure of what was happening, as Washington sometimes failed to tell the Fleet what was going on that might concern it, and what actions to take.

There is evidence of several communications breakdowns. The most important of these was the lack of exchange between the State Department and the Navy during the early part of the crisis. Because of the tension the Sixth Fleet had been deployed to the eastern Mediterranean during March, April, May, and early June. As tensions had eased, the Sixth Fleet resumed normal operations on June 15. It was about this time that Dulles began to realize a crisis might occur in July. While Dulles was having State Department task forces consider all the combinations and permutations of expected Middle East conflict, the entire Sixth Fleet was at anchor off the southern tip of Sardinia, calling back its last two DDs from the eastern Mediterranean patrol.

On the 7th of July, the CNO put the Sixth Fleet on a 24-hour alert for possible movement to the eastern Mediterranean. Four days later -- one week before the troubles Dulles expected -- that alert was cancelled, and again the fleet returned to normal operations. The Sixth Fleet was not placed on notice again until after Nasser nationalized the Canal.

It would appear that communication between Navy and State improved in August as during that month COMSIXTHFLT, CINCLANTFLT, and CINCSPCOMME (CINCNELM) had daily intelligence briefings. However, there began another "out of touch" period in September.

In October, the State Department seemed more in touch with the Navy than with its own representatives overseas. Both the Navy and the CIA were in communication with their opposite numbers in France, Britain, Israel, and Egypt, while State was not. There was a blackout on diplomatic intercourse imposed by the British and French. This began in mid-October and continued through the crisis period. The blackout was extended to the Navy only after Britain and France entered hostilities in November. It was never imposed on intelligence channels, and the CIA was the only group that never lost touch with its counterparts.<sup>1</sup>

Although communications were better between State and Navy in October and November, there was no rationale given by State for its requests of the Navy. This was especially true during the period of actual hostilities. The State Department and the Navy differed tremendously on preferred evacuation plans. The CNO didn't want to split up the fleet and send ships into Haifa and Alexandria. During the hostilities, the various commanding

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Robert Amery (June, 1969).

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officers in the Sixth Fleet were not told why they were sent to various places or what their purpose was to be, at least partly because the U.S. was uncertain what action would have to be taken (if any) and against whom.

On October 28, the day before the Israeli Defense Force went into Sinai, Dulles asked his representatives in the Middle East to begin communications with CINCNELM.<sup>1</sup> As Sixth Fleet task forces moved closer to shore for evacuations, their commanders established direct contact with State personnel ashore. However, representatives in Cairo and Tel Aviv were still trying to communicate with CINCNELM through the State Department in Washington. On October 30, Dulles had to redirect his ambassadors to communicate directly with CINCNELM as departmental relay was introducing "unwarranted and unnecessary delay."<sup>2</sup> On November 1, Ambassador Hare's connections with Washington were ruptured. Dulles had no idea how the Cairo evacuation was progressing and asked Brown to relay Hare's communications.<sup>3</sup> After some delay, contact was established.

The Sixth Fleet was in direct contact with the British and French fleets for the first few days of hostilities. Most of the initial contacts were friendly warnings of movements. On October 28, the British and French offered to fly yellow flags to avoid confusions with Sixth Fleet exercise Beehive.<sup>4</sup> On October 31, the Sixth Fleet Haifa task group got out of the way of French destroyers firing on Egyptians. On November 1, the French asked U.S. ships to display large ensigns, and both British and French promised not to interfere during American evacuations. However, by November 2, the tone of exchanges changed; the British told Brown to get out of the way. Both British and French refused to answer, when sighted and challenged by Americans. Both threatened to shoot at Sixth Fleet submarines when undeclared. These breakdowns caused a great deal of unnecessary worry.

Within the Sixth Fleet, communications vacillated from good to bad. They were best handled when they were least needed. Minimize was put into effect at the end of October. It worked effectively and relieved the burden on communications facilities, but was discontinued just as hostilities broke out and not reinstated for a week.

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<sup>1</sup>U. S. Navy, #280604 SECSTATE to COMSIXTHFLT and Middle East Embassies (October 28, 1956).

<sup>2</sup>U. S. Navy, #301700 SECSTATE to CINCNELM etc., (October 30, 1956).

<sup>3</sup>U. S. Navy, #011529 CNO to COMSIXTHFLT (November 1, 1956).

<sup>4</sup>U. S. Navy, #281451 CINCNELM to COMSIXTHFLT (October 28, 1956).

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Also unusual is the fact that during the only period of actual operations, the Fleet Marine Headquarters was embarked on an APA (the Cambria) whose "communications, personnel facilities, and troop operations spaces are much less satisfactory than those of an AGC.... The facilities afforded by the command configured APA are not considered adequate for the control of all elements of the landing force and its air and Naval gunfire support."<sup>1</sup>

CINCNELM in the Pocono was attempting to handle three times the usual crypto load with half the personnel and machines. On November 1 poor communications caused a lack of information on the location of the evacuees. On November 2, CINCNELM reported communications were inadequate and imposing serious handicaps.<sup>2</sup> He asked for more equipment and personnel, which didn't arrive until November 8 when hostilities had ended.

A heavy communications load (especially crypto) was resulting in serious delays. Average transmitting and decoding times for operational immediate traffic were 5-1/2 hours and 5 hours respectively, with "numerous" delays of up to four days. "Widespread multiplicity, duplication of content and verbiage of Middle East intelligence summaries and SitReps, some from commands not directly concerned with operations in the area, are contributing heavily to unsatisfactory communications situation by over-burdening circuits to the point that timely receipt of orders and vital intelligence are being denied."<sup>3</sup>

There were other delays, mistakes, and misinterpretations which caused great confusion and unnecessary concern. An example of this is the reported 38-hour delay between sighting and reporting during the period of Soviet threats. The greatest example of poor communications occurred on November 8. At this point, Soviet intervention seemed possible and was much feared. A British Canberra, shot down over Syria at 4,500 feet, was reported to have been at 45,000 feet (a simple but tremendously poor mistake). U.S. intelligence then judged that it must have been hit by a very sophisticated Mig manned by a Soviet pilot.<sup>4</sup> This contributed to a greatly stepped-up alert and augmentation of the Sixth Fleet. Prior to that time intelligence communications, analyses, and judgments had been unusually fast and excellent.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Marine Corps, Memo from Commanding General, First Provisional Marine Force, Fleet Marine Force Atlantic to Commanding General Fleet Marine Force Atlantic (January 31, 1957).

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Navy, #081822 CINCNELM to SecState (November 8, 1956), and U.S. Navy #021908 CINCNELM to CNO (November 2, 1956).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., and U.S. Navy, #051606 CINCNELM to CNO.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Navy, #081822 CINCNELM to CNO (November 8, 1956).

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## LOGISTICS

Task Force 63, Sixth Fleet Service Force, under the command of Rear Admiral William Nelson supplied the Fleet with "fuel oil, repair parts, food, mail, movies, and even included repair periods alongside the repair ships while the ships were underway, a new innovation in maintaining ships at sea. Under normal conditions, the Fleet would have been weakened by ships returning to port for repairs. After the crisis, Admiral Brown lauded Admiral Nelson and paid tribute to the Service Force by calling it his 'secret weapon'. "<sup>1</sup>

During the summer of 1956, the Service Force was augmented as the number of ships in the Fleet increased. By November, support by 1 AKS and 1 AF "reached the point of marginal adequacy due to the characteristic dispersion of fleet units as well as growing numbers. "<sup>2</sup> A second AKS and a second AF were requested, but they never arrived. One AF was always in the Mediterranean, maintained by a shuttle between CONUS and Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean. A second AE was added to the Fleet, operated on a 4-month rotational basis, deployed from the Atlantic Fleet. There were no additional AD's. Two operated on the normal 4-month rotational basis. One AK was deployed on an intermittent basis.

Sixth Fleet lacked a sufficient number of oilers. The normal complement of 3 AO's supported the slightly augmented Fleet until November 1, when COMSIXTHFLT noted: "With addition HUK group, NEOSHO is a blessing but not enough to offset shift of operations to Eastern Mediterranean. With even the first increment of forces, consider 6 oilers justified to insure operations anywhere in Med. without logistic impedence, particularly in event oiler breakdown. "<sup>3</sup> The Suez War pointed up the fact that the activation of Fleet oilers was too slow to meet the recommended schedule. Since the major limitation on the LANTFLT forces during the Suez War was imposed by the paucity of fleet oilers, CINCLANTFLT requested that the "USST AO's be retained in the MSTS Nucleus Fleet as a normal procedure. "<sup>4</sup>

After November 3, two additional Fleet AO's were maintained in the Mediterranean and an MSTS white AO was deployed as a replacement for Marias, which was undergoing

<sup>1</sup> Garrett, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> U. S. Navy, #032005 COMSIXTHFLT to CINCNELM (November 3, 1956).

<sup>3</sup> U. S. Navy, #032005 COMSIXTHFLT to CINCNELM (November 3, 1956).

<sup>4</sup> U. S. Navy, Memo from CINCLANTFLT to CNO, Annual Report of the Commander in Chief, U. S. Atlantic Fleet (August 30, 1957), p. 76.

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overhaul.<sup>1</sup> For the remainder of the crisis period, there were 6 AO's with the Sixth Fleet. The source of supply of Navy Special Fuel Oil was changed from Near East sources to the U.S. Gulf Coast, while alternative sources of supply were developed for several locations.

Emergency repairs were carried out at Royal Navy Dockyards at Gibraltar and Malta. The U.S. used the repair facilities of a power whose actions it currently opposed!

The increased tempo of logistic support flights resulted in not only high utilization of all VR-24 aircraft, but also additional support flights by planes of other commands. It became apparent during the Suez War that when augmented forces are assigned to the Sixth Fleet or the tempo of operations increases, VR-24's must similarly be augmented in order to meet fully the additional lift requirements. During the crisis a marine R-4Q detachment of 4 aircraft from MCAS, Cherry Point, was made available to evacuate U.S. nationals. This operation could not have been conducted by VR-24 while it simultaneously rendered direct logistical support to Sixth Fleet.

The closure of the Suez Canal required revision of plans for effecting MIDEASTFOR destroyer reliefs. It was necessary to route destroyers around the Cape of Good Hope to and from CONUS. Involved were six-week transit times with an average of 4 fuel stops. The increased transiting time required destroyers to remain on station for a far greater duration than normal -- three months in the case of a few ships. This resulted in a maintenance problem which was solved by sending Prairie (AD 15) from WESTPAC. Prairie arrived in the area November 16 and served as a flagship for COMIDEASTFOR.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Navy, CINCNELM, Report of Operations and Condition of Command, 1 July 1956 - 1 July 1957, p. 10.

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## THE CONSEQUENCES OF SUEZ

This section places the Suez Crisis in historical perspective by discussing its effect on subsequent events, based on the author's knowledge of the crisis and her interpretation of later events in the light of that knowledge.

The Suez Crisis changed the presence of the Great Powers in the Near East. It contributed to the collapse of Franco-British hegemony, the consolidation of Soviet inroads, and the strengthening of Arab nationalism. It provided a rehearsal of the 1967 War. It nullified the Tripartite Declaration and broke up the Anglo-Jordanian Alliance and the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1954. It weakened and eventually led to the destruction of the Baghdad Pact. It caused the sharpest break in the history of the Anglo-American entente. And it paralyzed NATO and stimulated France's eventual withdrawal from NATO military commands.

The Suez Crisis was a leader's crisis. It demonstrated the personal power of the British Prime Minister and the tremendous influence of the United States and its President. "Men bulk larger in the story than governments or impersonal societal forces. Democratic ideals, the complexity of modern politics, lightning communications and the interdependence of nations are often thought to have reduced the personal influence of individual leaders in events. But Suez was set in motion by the personal philosophies, ambitions and animosities of such men as Ben Gurion, Nasser, Eden, Mollet, Khrushchev, Eisenhower, and Dulles."<sup>1</sup> At few other times have men been held so personally responsible for the fate of armies and nations. Suez destroyed Eden's health and career and increased Nasser's self-confidence and power.

The crisis ended the myth of British and French ability to single-handedly play Great Power politics. It revealed their dependence on U.S. support. Suez demonstrated that their military endeavors were wholly dependent upon financial constraints. The Sterling Area was shown to be vulnerable as a banking system. The British Commonwealth ceased to speak with one voice in world affairs. Nasser proved to be neither a weakling nor a Hitler. Finally, Suez was a costly mistake pointing up the persistence of outdated and uninformed policies toward the Near East. The reactions of Britain and France were more suited to an earlier "colonialist" era and showed little understanding of modern-day Egypt and the climate of world opinion.

After World War II the United States became militarily, diplomatically and morally a guarantor of the independent state of Israel. The British were then unwilling to wholeheartedly support a Zionist state in Palestine but were sponsors of Arab unity.

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<sup>1</sup> Love, op. cit., p. 2.



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Suez brought a reversal of these roles: a Britain which was a party to an Israeli assault on Egypt, and a United States which moved against its oldest allies and the state of Israel.

The three Western powers had felt collectively responsible for the defense of common interests and needs in the Near East. After Suez, the United States took on the task of custodian of the Western position in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Eisenhower Doctrine replaced the Tripartite Agreement with Britain and France.

The announced objectives of France and Britain at the time of the invasion were: (1) to stop the fighting, (2) to keep open the Suez Canal, and (3) to ensure the flow of oil supplies. Their unannounced objectives were: (1) to regain control of the Suez Canal, (2) to bring down Nasser, (3) to block Soviet penetration, (4) to reestablish the credibility of power of the entente cordiale. The outcome was the exact opposite of the expectations: (1) the Suez Canal was blocked (and Franco-British troops held only 2/5 of it), (2) the oil supplies from the Near East were cut off, (3) Nasser retained the Canal and enjoyed a much stronger position than before, (4) the Soviets found the way much easier for further incursions, (5) the United States took the mantle from the British and French who could no longer dominate the area. It became apparent that no settlement could be reached without the two superpowers.

The three allies -- Britain, France, and Israel -- based their venture on misguided assumptions. They failed to recognize Soviet or American perceptions of national interests. They assumed benign neutrality by an electioneering Eisenhower and non-involvement of a Soviet Union consumed by problems on its Western flank. Where good strategy was essential, planning was impeded by pressures of secrecy and personal preferences -- such as Eden's desire not to reveal that Britain was in concert with Israel. Tactics were poor because of military and economic constraints.

The crisis having exposed the economic and military weaknesses of Britain and France, the two began to restructure their policies and redefine their orientations. Britain revamped her defenses and announced that her Middle East presence would be reduced to Aden and the Persian Gulf. France, disillusioned with the United States, began to think about her own "Force de Frappe." In the Middle East, life became more perilous for friends of Britain and France. Nuri al Said of Iraq, for instance, faced with steadily growing opposition fed by stinging diatribes against his western orientation, eventually was deposed and murdered.

The so-called "vacuum" left by the absence of Franco-British influence in the Near East provided an arena for the extension of Soviet and American influence. The Soviet Union saw the prize and in Arab eyes reaped the laurels for having "brought down the colonialist aggressors." The credibility of their support was established. The hostility of the U.N. and the 'Third World' was diverted from Russian atrocities in Hungary. With the paralysis of the Western coalition, the Soviets played on the rifts in NATO in

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an effort to destroy it. Sighting France as the weakest link, they did indeed cause some increase in the independent feeling of that country. The Soviets became more deeply rooted in the Near East, and American policy turned reactive to them.

American interests in the Near East needed defining. Long-term desires and short-term necessities were often found contradictory. During the Suez Crisis, the U. S. sought to preserve its own and European oil interests and supplies, sustain the harmony of NATO, and continue to strengthen the United Nations. Its primary long-term interests are land, sea, and air routes, and petroleum supplies. To ensure these after the Franco-British abdication, the U. S. substantially replaced British and French bases west of Suez with the continued presence of the Sixth Fleet, and assumed (with the Eisenhower Doctrine) independent guarantees to Arab countries. The Soviet Union had "vaulted over the northern tier" and the Arabs found her a convenient but not very likeable ally. The U. S. military presence became their insurance against a feared Soviet take-over. For, while reaping the benefits of Soviet aid, the Arabs did not want to become satellites. They thought the strong presence of the United States in the Mediterranean would be their protection against this. After Suez, the Soviet Union tried to neutralize and weaken the Sixth Fleet.

The Arabs soon discovered that the superpower stalemate in the Near East gave them tremendous latitude in action and demands. Suez left Nasser -- far from weakened -- undisputed leader of the Arab world. His position was consolidated and his stature increased. Nasser's objective was attained -- control over the Suez Canal. By his diplomatic victory over Britain and France, he was able to hide a great military defeat by Israel. Angered and with a new sense of power, Nasser strengthened his opposition to French and British presence in Algeria, Cyprus, Yemen, and Aden.

For the Israelis, the invasion was a rehearsal for the 1967 War. With Suez, Israel gained in the short run but lost in the long term. The Gulf of Aqaba was opened up to Israeli shipping and the Fedayeen ceased their attacks. But Israel's credibility suffered from an excess of Great Power support at Suez. Her security, advanced for a time, became more threatened by a strengthened Nasser and the resulting uniting of the Arab front. She had stymied any opportunity of being allowed to use the Suez Canal. Suez resulted in the first hardships for the large and prosperous Jewish community in Egypt. The crisis produced a Nasser with more cause and more strength to call for increased Arab hostility toward Israel. Had Israel acted alone, she might have been able to topple Nasser and would certainly have established her credibility to such an extent that the Arab threat would have been permanently impaired.

The nonaligned nations saw in Suez the ability to oppose the great powers and make gains from their rivalry. They acquired a new feeling of power. The anti-colonialists were handed a 'colonialist venture' to point to in their outcries. The Third World was buoyed up by Egypt's demonstration of independence.

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The world community gained from Suez a stronger United Nations. The establishment of a U.N. Emergency Force gave "teeth" to that organization and made it a much more viable tool for world peace than the League of Nations had ever been. The Secretary General established his personal power and authority. The United Nations gained a greater ability to intercede in and help solve the rivalries and difficulties of the Near East for a time.

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