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Middle East Fighting Ended

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Israel Defeats Arab States

The war begun June 5 between Israel and the Arab states ended in an Israeli military victory within 6 days. The fighting was ended in 3 stages as successive UN-proposed cease-fires were accepted by Jordan (June 7), the United Arab Republic (June 8) and Syria (June 9-10). Before the fighting halted, Israel was reported to have shattered the armies and air forces of the Arab countries encircling it. The Israeli victory had been foreshadowed in the first 48 hours of military action. [See 1967 [Middle East War Erupts: Israel Wins Lightning Victory](#)]

Israel reported June 11 that casualties suffered by its forces on the Jordanian, Egyptian and Syrian fronts totaled 679 killed and 2,563 wounded, 255 of them seriously. (Israeli combat fatalities in the Sinai war with Egypt in 1956 had numbered 172.)

In their lightning military campaign against the Arabs, Israel's forces:

- Conquered all of Egypt's Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip, reaching the east bank of the Suez Canal and seizing Sharm El Sheik to break the UAR blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba.
- Captured the Old City of Jerusalem, occupied by Jordan since the 1948-49 Arab-Israel war, and all Jordanian territory adjoining Israel west of the Jordan River.
- Drove 12 miles into Syria, seizing strategic heights from which Syrian guns for years had shelled Israeli border settlements in the northern Galilee.

The conflict brought these other developments:

Israeli planes and patrol boats accidentally attacked a U.S. Navy ship in the Mediterranean June 8, killing at least 34 American crewmen.

Israeli leaders expressed determination not to surrender Arab territories which their armed forces had captured in the 6-day war.

Gamal Abdel Nasser resigned as president of the UAR and then quickly withdrew his decision.

In a show of support for their Arab allies, the Soviet Union and several other East European Communist states severed diplomatic relations with Israel.

Major developments on the Jordanian, Sinai-Suez and Syrian fronts prior to cessation of hostilities:

Jordanian Front

Israeli forces captured the Jordanian-held Old City of Jerusalem and all Jordanian territory on the west bank of the Jordan River June 7. Fighting on the Jordanian front came to a halt later June 7 after Jordan had accepted a UN Security Council cease-fire order.

The battle for Jordanian Jerusalem, which had begun June 5, ended when an Israeli column broke through St. Stephen's Gate at the eastern end of the Old City. The occupation of the Old City followed a night of intense shelling and bombing of Jordanian positions; the firing was centered on the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane. Jordanian artillery and mortar positions south of the city were bombed by Israeli jets. Jordanian guns inside the Old City had shelled the Israeli sector of Jerusalem intensively, hitting the Yemin Moshe and Musrara quarters and Mount Zion.

The city was officially surrendered to the Israeli commander by a group of Arab civilians outside the Mosque of Omar. While Jordanian Jerusalem was being occupied, other Israeli troops seized the remainder of the Mt. Scopus demilitarized zone on the northeastern outskirts of the city; part of the heights had been captured from the Jordanians June 6.

Israeli forces captured the principal Jordanian cities of Jericho, Nablus and Hebron June 7, securing control of all Jordanian territory west of the Jordan River.

(A U.S. newsman covering the battle of Jerusalem was shot in the head in the Jordanian sector June 5 and died the following day. He was Ted Yates, 36, NBC-TV director-producer. Another American newsman was killed in the Negev desert June 5. Paul Schutzer, 36, a photographer for Time-Life, died when the Israeli half-track in which he was riding was set afire after it was struck by a shell.)

Amman reported June 9 that 15,000 Jordanians--soldiers and civilians--had been killed in the brief war with Israel. But a report from Beirut June 10 quoted Jordanian military sources as saying that 25,000 Jordanian soldiers had been killed, wounded and captured, about half the army's strength.

Jordanian army authorities charged June 9 that Israeli planes had used napalm against both military and civilian targets. One napalm attack reportedly was made against army field hospitals near Jenin and Nablus.

The Israeli government June 8 appointed ex-Brigadier General Chaim Herzog, former Israeli commander of the Jerusalem Military District, as military governor of the Western Bank (all of Jordan west of the Jordan River). In his first official act in the post, Herzog met with leaders of Christian sects and assured them that Israel would respect all Christian shrines in the Old City.

(Pope Paul VI had issued appeals June 5 and 7 urging that Jerusalem be declared an open city to spare its shrines from the war. The pope's first plea was made June 5 to UN Secretary General U Thant and the governments of Egypt, Syria and Jordan. The pope also called on Thant to "make every effort" to halt the conflict. In an address to a group of pilgrims in the Vatican June 7, Pope Paul expressed hope that the belligerents would make Jerusalem "a refuge for the unarmed and the wounded [and] a symbol for all men of hope and peace.")

Sinai-Suez Front

Following the cutting-off of the Gaza Strip in the initial battle with Egyptian forces, one column of Israeli troops penetrated 35 miles into the northern Sinai Peninsula June 6 and captured El Arish, a main Egyptian communications center, in a fierce 3-hour fight. Israeli planes immediately began to use the El Arish airfield. The field had been bombed June 5, and 6 UAR MiG-17s were destroyed. More than 1,000 Egyptian soldiers were captured in fighting for the town. 50 Soviet-made tanks were taken.

While one Israeli column headed west toward the Suez Canal after the capture of El Arish, other Israeli units spread out through the Sinai Desert, one force driving toward Sharm El Sheik, the Egyptian strongpoint that dominated the mouth of the UAR-blockaded Gulf of Aqaba.

A Tel Aviv communique issued June 7 claimed total victory for Israeli forces in the Sinai campaign. The report said Israeli troops had captured the entire peninsula, sweeping to the east bank of the Suez Canal, capturing Sharm El Sheik without resistance and lifting the blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba. Sharm El Sheik was taken by an air-borne unit; on arrival at the objective the troops were said to have found the Egyptian positions deserted except for the crew of a small Israeli patrol boat. The Israeli navy men were reported to have found that the Strait of Tiran had not been mined as claimed by Egypt.

A victory proclamation issued June 7 by Major General Itzhak Rabin, Israeli chief of staff, declared: "The Egyptians are defeated. All their efforts are aimed at withdrawing behind the Suez Canal, and we are taking care of that. The whole area is in our hands. The main effort of the Egyptians is to save themselves."

Brigadier Mordkhai Hod, Israeli air force commander, reported later that 441 Arab planes had been destroyed in 3 days of fighting--410 June 5, 17 June 6 and 14 June 7.

The Israeli military successes were confirmed by an Egyptian military communique June 7. It conceded that UAR troops in Sinai had withdrawn from first-line positions and were engaged in heavy fighting from secondary positions. A UAR High Command communique later June 7 reported that Israeli paratroopers had been "completely wiped out" after landing on the "second-line Egyptian front." The command did not locate the fighting. The withdrawal of Egyptian forces from some areas, the communique said, was necessary because of the activities of "the Zionist enemy, supported by foreign sources." (This was in reference to Arab charges that U.S. and British planes had provided air cover for advancing Israeli troops.) The command also reported the downing of 6 Israeli jets in the Suez area June 7.

Israel reported June 8 that 3 fierce battles were underway in the western Sinai desert where the remnants of 2 Egyptian armored divisions and 4 infantry divisions were apparently trapped by advancing Israeli forces. The Tel Aviv

statement claimed that in the day's fighting at least 50 Egyptian tanks had been destroyed and 8 UAR planes shot down. Israeli planes also were said to have bombed Soviet-made missile sites in the Suez Canal zone. Points reported captured by Israeli forces in western Sinai: oil fields at Ras Sudar, south of the port of Taufiq; Rumana, near Port Said; Nakhil; Thamed. At least 30 Egyptian tanks were reported knocked out in the Nakhil-Thamed area. 20 other tanks were reported destroyed at Bir Gifgafa, 50 miles east of the Suez Canal.

General Rabin told a news conference in Tel Aviv later June 8 that "we are actually witnessing the total destruction of the Egyptian forces in the Sinai." An additional 3 Arab planes were reported destroyed, bringing the total loss to 444.

The UAR High Command and other Egyptian sources gave this account of military developments June 8: Egyptian planes had shot down 25 Israeli jets over the Sinai, Sharm El Sheik and Suez areas. 7 of the planes had been downed in the Suez Canal Zone and 2 near Cairo. Some areas of Cairo had been bombed, but there was little damage. 3,500 Israeli prisoners had been brought to Cairo June 7. Several Israeli armored columns were "locked in between El Arish and the coast." Israeli armored units attempting to infiltrate behind El Arish and drive along the coastal road toward Cairo were destroyed by Egyptian planes. "Our gallant forces are still resisting with matchless courage inside El Arish itself," despite Israeli claims that the stronghold had been taken.

Following the UAR's acceptance of a UN cease-fire order June 8, a Cairo broadcast June 9 informed the Egyptian people of the government's decision and announced that the war with Israel was over. Several hours before the announcement, an Egyptian military communique had charged that "Israeli enemy forces supported by the forces of imperialism are continuing the attacks against our forces westward toward the Suez Canal" despite the UAR's observance of the cease-fire. The Israeli truce violations, according to the Egyptians, included air strikes against ships in the Suez Canal resulting in obstruction of the waterway:

Reporting on the Sinai campaign, Brigadier General Yeshayahu Gavish, Israeli commander of the southern front, said June 12 that Israeli forces had destroyed 500-600 Egyptian tanks and captured 100 others in working order. About 3,000 prisoners had been taken but "tens of thousands" of other UAR troops were still wandering in the Sinai, Gavish said. Gavish estimated that of 150,000 UAR troops involved in the Sinai campaign, 7,000-10,000 had been killed. Israeli losses in the Sinai operation, according to Gavish, were 275 killed, about 800 wounded and 61 tanks destroyed or damaged.

Gavish disclosed that Israeli forces had captured a UAR rocket site with 9 Soviet-made surface-to-air missiles intact in an area between the Mitla Pass and the Suez Canal. Reiterating Israeli charges that Egyptian forces were the first to start the war, Gavish said UAR armored forces had attacked the Israeli border at 6:30 a.m. June 5 but that no Egyptian troops had crossed the border. Israeli troops, he said, started operations on 3 fronts at 8:15 a.m. following indications of Egyptian "intention to cut our forces in the Negev Desert in two."

A Soviet ship had passed through the Strait of Tiran June 8 and became the first vessel to do so since Israeli forces had seized Sharm El Sheik the previous day and Tel Aviv had announced lifting of the blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba. The Russian vessel was on its way to the Jordanian port of Aqaba. The first Israeli ship passed through the strait June 11.

Syrian Front

Military activity on the Syrian front June 5-8 was principally confined to Syrian shelling of Israeli border settlements north of the Sea of Galilee. Heavy damage was inflicted on the towns of Kfar Szold, Shamir, Gonen and Notera in the Hula Valley. Israeli officials June 8 denied a Damascus claim that Syrian forces had entered Israel and were advancing toward Nazareth. The Damascus report said Syrian forces had inflicted heavy losses on Israeli tanks, artillery units and troops observed moving "in the northern sector of the front across from the Azulia."

Heavy fighting between Israeli and Syrian forces began June 9, the day Syria announced acceptance of the UN cease-fire order. (Israel had agreed to the truce June 6 on condition that Syria, the UAR, and Jordan complied.)

Following an Israeli charge that Syria had violated the cease-fire by shelling 16 settlements on the border, Israeli troops and armored forces smashed deep into Syria that day. The fiercest fighting of the war ensued and by midnight the Syrians had started to abandon bunkers and other positions near the border. The Israeli advance continued June 10 despite heavy Syrian resistance and ended that day with a Syrian-Israeli agreement to obey the UN's cease-fire call.

The halt in the fighting found Israeli troops occupying the Syrian towns of Masadah, Butmiyah and El Quneitra. El Quneitra represented the deepest Israeli advance, about 12 miles inside Syria and 40 miles from Damascus. The entire southwestern corner of Syria was thus in Israeli hands, including the great Golan plateau, which

dominated Israeli territory in the Jordan Valley and around the Sea of Galilee. It was from these heights that Syrian guns had shelled Israeli settlements for many years.

A Syrian military broadcast June 9 had charged that "a wide-scale Israeli invasion of the Syrian frontier" had been launched. Damascus reported initial successes that day, claiming the destruction of 2 Israeli tank columns attempting to advance on the villages of Bahriyat, near the demilitarized zone north of the Sea of Galilee, and on Nasiriyah.

A Damascus report June 10 conceded the fall of El Quneitra. This was followed by a later Syrian dispatch that fighting was still in progress in the town. Syria charged that Israeli planes had bombed Damascus 5 minutes after the latest cease-fire was to have gone into effect. 2 Israeli planes were reported shot down in the raid. The Syrian radio charged that Israeli planes had flown 500-600 sorties over the Syrian capital June 9.

Israeli and Syrian representatives signed the cease-fire agreement in El Quneitra June 11 at a meeting with UN military personnel. General Moshe Dayan, Israeli defense minister, had arranged for the truce in a meeting June 10 with General Odd Bull, head of the UN Truce Supervisory Organization.