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Britain, France Move on Suez

Israeli armed forces stabbed deep into Egypt's Sinai Peninsula October 29 and drove toward the Suez Canal.

Britain and France responded by issuing a 12-hr. ultimatum to Israel and Egypt October 30 demanding that hostilities cease and announcing plans to reoccupy the Suez Canal Zone.

In an emergency session of the UN Security Council October 30, Britain and France vetoed a U.S.-authored resolution against the new outbreak of military activities in Egypt.

Israelis 25 Miles from Canal

The Israeli forces crossed the Egyptian border from the Negev October 29 on a front north of Elath, the southern Israeli seaport near Aqaba. The drive began with destruction of Egyptian bases near Ras el Naqb and Kuntilla on the southern Egyptian-Israeli frontier. The Israeli units, described in reports from Israel as being "too big for a reprisal and too small for a war," reportedly advanced more than 75 mi. into the Sinai Peninsula to within 25 mi. of the Suez Canal. Israeli officials said October 29 that the attackers had taken up positions west of Nakhl. Sinai was said to be "lightly defended" by Egypt because of recent Egyptian troop withdrawals to bolster canal defenses.

Invasion Called Defensive Step

An Israeli Foreign Ministry statement October 29 described the attack as "security measures to eliminate the Egyptian fedayeen [commando] bases in the Sinai Peninsula" from which raids repeatedly had been launched across the Israeli frontier. The Ministry said that the decision to strike at Egypt (reportedly made at an Israeli Cabt. session October 29) followed persistent declarations by Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser that "his country remains in a state of war with Israel." Egyptian hopes of "annihilating" Israel, the Israeli statement said, had been "crowned a few days ago by a Syrian-Jordan-Egyptian military command under the Egyptian Commander-in-Chief". Israel reported that 24 Israelis had been killed and wounded by fedayeen mines in "the last week." [See 1956 [World News: Suez Talks Rejected; Other Developments](#)]

Egypt Says Attack Met

Egyptian Army authorities said October 30 that the Israeli attackers had suffered "heavy casualties" and that Egyptian units were "liquidating" the Israelis in the Sinai area. An Egyptian communique said that the Israelis had been halted at Kuntilla, Nakhl and el Mimet. An Egyptian naval force, including a destroyer, 2 minelayers and another vessel, was reported sighted off the Israeli coast near Haifa October 29. Cairo dispatches October 29 reported gunfire on the Gaza Strip frontier and an Egyptian transport missing on a Damascus-Cairo flight with 21 army officers and newsmen.

Israel Widens Front

Israeli communiques October 30 said that the attack on Egypt had been widened along a 70-mi. front. Israel claimed the capture of Quseima on the northern Sinai frontier and placed Israeli forces within 20 mi. of the Suez Canal west of Nakhl. Israeli dispatches said that the Israeli AF had been unleashed over the Sinai Peninsula following strafing of Israeli ground units by the Egyptian AF. Israel October 30 claimed 3 Egyptian Mig-15 jets destroyed and one Israeli plane damaged.

Egyptian communiques October 30 said 6 Israeli aircraft and 24 armored cars had been destroyed by the Egyptian AF. Egypt said that 2 Israeli jets had been shot down by ground fire and that no Egyptian planes had been lost. Egyptian ground forces were said October 30 to be "mopping up" Israeli troops. Cairo and Tel Aviv reported air raid alerts October 30, but no bombing was heard.

Attack Follows Mobilization

The Israeli attack followed partial mobilization and massing of reserves on Israel's Arab-state frontiers. The Israeli Government said October 28 that these measures were justified due to continued Arab statements that "their principal concern is a war of destruction against Israel." Premier David Ben-Gurion had told the Knesset (Parlt.) in Jerusalem October 17 that Israel faced its greatest danger from "the Egyptian fascist dictator" who "does not conceal his intention to liquidate the State of Israel." The Knesset October 17 approved Ben-Gurion's foreign policy by a vote of 76-13 and defeated by 84-4 Communist motions for the end of reprisal raids.

Eisenhower Opposes Attack

President Eisenhower revealed October 28 that he had sent Ben-Gurion a personal message October 27 noting "disturbing reports from the Middle East," including word of "heavy mobilization" of Israeli armed forces, and urging that "no forceful initiative be taken which would endanger the peace." Mr. Eisenhower said the U.S. had not heard of "large scale mobilization in countries neighboring Israel which would warrant such Israeli" action. He said he would send "a further urgent message" to Ben-Gurion and similar notes to Arab states. [See 1956 [Eisenhower Administration: Claims Free World Gains; Other Developments](#)]

Arabs Marshal Forces

All Egyptian soldiers and reservists were recalled to their units October 29, and President Nasser ordered general mobilization in Egypt October 31 after the Israeli attack in Sinai. Syria began partial mobilization October 30. Jordan called for civilian preparations for defense October 30, and Saudi Arabia reportedly ordered general mobilization. Iraq, which had been massing troops on its Jordanian frontier since October 15, assured Egypt of all necessary aid October 30. [See 1956 [World News: Jordan Asks UN Session; Other Developments](#)]

(Egypt, Jordan and Syria October 25 signed an agreement placing their armies under a joint command headed by Major General Abdel Hakim Amer, Egyptian Commander-in-Chief and War Minister. Amer said October 24 that the agreement would provide for Egyptian strategic leadership of the 3 armies in event of war with Israel, but would not place the Syrian or Jordanian forces under direct tactical command of Egypt. In case of conflict, Iraqi forces entering Jordan would remain under Jordanian command, Amer said. Jordanian King Hussein denied October 24 that the pact had aligned Jordan with the Egyptian-Saudi Arabian-Syrian "southern tier" alliance.) [See 1956 [World News: Jordan Asks UN Session; Other Developments](#); 1956 [Suez: SCUA Plan Devised; Other Developments](#)]

U.S. Announces UN Appeal

A White House statement issued October 29 said that the U.S. would refer the Israeli attack on Egypt to the UN Security Council. The decision was said to be based on the "tripartite declaration of 1950" in which the U.S., Britain and France pledged to guarantee existing Arab-Israeli borders. [See 1956 [World News: Jordan Asks UN Session; Other Developments](#); 1956 [NATO Council: To Study NATO Extension; Other Developments](#); 1956 [Middle East: Gaza Cease-Fire Accepted; Other Developments](#)]

The statement disclosed that President Eisenhower, in a meeting with State Secretary John Foster Dulles, Defense Secretary Charles E. Wilson, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Admiral Arthur W. Radford, CIA Director Allen W. Dulles and other Admin. leaders October 29, had "recalled that the U.S." had "pledged itself to assist the victim of any aggression in the Middle East." "We shall honor our pledge," the statement said. [See 1956 [World News: Jordan Asks UN Session; Other Developments](#)]

Anglo-French Ultimatum Served

A joint British-French ultimatum to Israel and Egypt October 30 demanded immediate cessation of all fighting and withdrawal of military forces to positions at least 10 mi. from the Suez Canal. A further note to Egypt urged that, in order to insure safety of the canal and its commerce, Egypt accept temporary occupation of key canal zone defenses and Port Said, Ismailia and Suez by British and French forces. The ultimatum followed a meeting October 30 of British Prime Minister Sir Anthony Eden and Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd, French Premier Guy Mollet and Foreign Minister Christian Pineau. [See 1956 [World News: Suez Talks Rejected; Other Developments](#)]

Eden told the British House of Commons October 30 that if "one or both" of the powers had not obeyed the ultimatum within 12 hrs. "British and French forces will intervene in whatever strength may be necessary to secure compliance." "We hope," Eden said, "that compliance by both sides with our appeal" would enable Britain and France to "separate the combatants and to remove the risk to free passage through the canal." There would then be, he said, "no need for anything more than token forces." The House October 30 defeated a Laborite censure motion against Eden's policies by 270-218. [See 1956 [Suez: West Offers 'Users' Plan; Other Developments](#)]

Eden supported the U.S. request for a meeting of the UN Security Council on the Israeli attack. He said, however, that while the "spirit of the [1950 tripartite] declaration" had been invoked by the Anglo-French ultimatum, Egypt had always opposed the declaration's application. Eden said that Israel had assured Britain October 29 that it "would not attack Jordan" and thus invoke the Anglo-Jordanian defense pact. British sources said October 30 that action would not be taken under the 1954 Anglo-Egyptian Suez evacuation agreement, which was said to bar specifically British reoccupation of the zone in event of an Israeli attack. [See 1954 [World News: Suez Agreement Signed; Other Developments](#)]

French Premier Mollet revealed the ultimatum to the National Assembly October 30. He said that "the fighting which is being prepared will take place in the canal zone" He denounced the Nasser regime for "resorting to force" and said many thought "Israel is acting in legitimate self-defense." He said France would support the U.S. call for UN action and that the impending Suez measures had been based on a "flawless Franco-British solidarity." The National Assembly approved the Mollet Government's Suez policy early October 31 by 368-182. [See 1956 [Suez: West Prepares Canal Plan; Other Developments](#)]

Egypt Defiant, Israel Accepts

Egyptian President Nasser October 30 rejected the Anglo-French ultimatum and warned that Egypt would fight if attacked by foreign forces. He asked an immediate UN Security Council session to consider the threat of intervention. He told U.S., French, British and Soviet envoys that the ultimatum "constitutes aggression" and "a flagrant violation of the UN Charter."

Israel announced it would accept the ultimatum and withdraw troops from the immediate area of the canal. Israel said, however, that its compliance "assumed" a "positive reaction" from Egypt.

Eisenhower Appeals to Allies

President Eisenhower appealed personally to Eden and Mollet October 30 to halt the projected British-French intervention in the Egyptian crisis. A White House statement said that Mr. Eisenhower's appeal had been sent "as soon as the President received his first knowledge, through press reports, of the ultimatum." The statement said the President had asked that "full opportunity" be given the UN to settle the crisis "by peaceful means." Press reports October 30 said the President was "disturbed" over the lack of Western coordination of policy on the Egyptian situation.

State Secretary Dulles called in British and French envoys Oct 30 to express "extreme displeasure" at the Anglo-French failure to inform the U.S. of the impending ultimatum. British diplomatic sources, however, asserted October 30 that U.S. Ambassador-to-Britain Winthrop W. Aldrich had been informed of the Anglo-French move at least 7 hrs. before the first news reports of the ultimatum. The British and French envoys reportedly denied State Department suspicions of Israeli-British-French "collusion" to provoke military action against Egypt.

Allies Prepare Suez Attack

Among military moves reported in preparation for Anglo-French occupation of Suez: the British aircraft carriers Albion, Eagle and Bulwark, a "strong" British destroyer force and the French cruiser Georges Leygues left Malta October 29-30; British and French paratroops on Cyprus began to move from camps to airfields October 30 in readiness for an airborne assault on the canal zone; British landing craft loaded armored units and Royal Marine commandos on Malta and Cyprus October 30. Forces on Cyprus were said to total 25,000-30,000 Britons, 4,000-5,000 French paratroops. Britain also was said to have large reserves

on Malta and its 10th Armored Div. in Libya. [See 1956 [Suez: UN Opens Debate; Other Developments](#); 1956 [Suez: West Prepares Canal Plan; Other Developments](#)]

Anglo-French Vetoes Cast

Resolutions against the military actions developing against Egypt were vetoed twice by Britain and France during a UN Security Council session in New York October 30 held at the request of the U.S. It was the first time Britain had used the veto, and the first instance of the U.S. and Russia being aligned against Britain and France on a major issue before the council.

Action came first on an American-sponsored resolution calling for: (1) "Israel and Egypt immediately to cease fire"; (2) Israel to "withdraw its armed forces behind the established armistice lines"; (3) "all members" to "refrain from the use of force or threat of force in the area" and "refrain from giving any military, economic or financial assistance to Israel so long as it has not complied with" the resolution. Vote on the resolution was 7-2 (Australia and Belgium abstaining) but Britain and France--permanent members with veto power--cast the 2 negative votes. British delegate Sir Pierson Dixon held that the UN could not act quickly enough to affect the Egyptian-Israeli situation.

U.S. Ambassador-to-UN Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. said the UN had a "clear and unchallenged responsibility" to maintain the Palestine armistice agreements. Soviet delegate Arkady A. Sobolev said Britain and France were trying to use "Israeli aggression" as an excuse for seizing the Suez Canal in another act of "aggression against Egypt." Egyptian spokesman Omar Loutfi said the Israeli attack was "unprovoked" and "entirely unjustifiable." But Israeli spokesman Abba Eban said Israel had been forced by fedayeen terrorism to "wipe out the bases in the Sinai wilderness from which murder and death and destruction are launched against it." Eban said that, during the 6 yrs. of armistice, 435 "incursions from Egyptian-controlled territory" had inflicted upon Israel 1,843 robberies and thefts, 1,339 armed clashes, 172 incidents of sabotage and casualties totaling 101 Israelis killed and 364 wounded (28 killed, 127 wounded this year).

The 7-2 vote (2 abstentions) was repeated in the council later October 30 to defeat by British-French veto a compromise Soviet resolution to urge a cease-fire and Israeli withdrawal from Egypt but omit recommendations that other UN members refrain from intervention.

(In a Security Council session October 25 to hear Israeli complaints against Jordan, Israeli Ambassador-to-U.S. Eban said Israel would "start no war" but would "fully reserve the right of self-defense." He said the UN had not been able to insure "minimal security" for Israel from Arab raids.) [See 1956 [World News: Suez Talks Rejected; Other Developments](#)]

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Citation:

"Middle East: Israel Attacks Egypt; Other Developments." *Facts On File World News Digest*: n. pag. *World News Digest*. Facts On File News Services, 30 Oct. 1956. Web. 30 June 2011. <<http://www.2facts.com/article/1956015570>>.

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Citation format:

The title of the article. (Year, Month Day). *Facts On File World News Digest*. Retrieved Month Day, Year, from World News Digest database.

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