Preparation Paper

Security Council 30 October 1956

Decision on Suez Crisis
A general overview

In July 1956 Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal and triggered a crisis. Despite extensive diplomacy, war soon resulted. Britain and France joined Israel in a coalition against Egypt. Their goals included capturing Sinai and the Suez Canal and toppling the Egyptian government. Before striking, the three nations synchronized their attacks: Israel started the conflict and France and Britain joined two days later. Israel invaded Egypt an 29 October. Israeli paratroops attacked Mitla Pass in western Sinai, with an overland column joining them a day later. After fighting local Egyptian formations, the paratroops advanced into southern Sinai, assisting in the capture of Sharm el-Sheikh, the gateway to the Tiran Straits, thereby relieving the Egyptian blockade of this passage. Israel also attacked northern and central Sinai, where armor and night operations secured an Israeli victory. In the north, Israeli forces encircled key outposts, allowing the subsequent conquest of al-Arish and Gaza. In the central zone, the fortunes of war ebbed and flowed for these days at Egypt's frontier fortifications. Israeli tanks pressured these points on several fronts, forcing their abandonment. Israeli forces subsequently advanced across Sinai, attaining all their goals.

Chronology

1948
14 May Israel's creation
15 May First Arab-Israeli War erupts

1949
31 January Israel and Egypt sign armistice ending First Arab-Israeli War

1951
1 September UN SC Res. 95 calling upon Egypt to terminate restrictions on the passage of international commercial shipping and goods through the Suez Canal.

1952
23 July Revolutionary Command Council replaces King Farouk in Egypt

1953
January Dwight D. Eisenhower becomes president of the United States

1954
July Signing of Anglo-Egyptian Treaty ending British occupation of Egypt

1955
28 February Israel raids Gaza
April Anthony Eden becomes British prime minister
September Egypt tightens Blockade of Tiran Straits
Egypt announces arms deal with Czechoslovakia
December Israeli Chief of Staff recommends attacking Sinai
Unsuccessful British attempt to bring Jordan into Baghdad Pact

1956
1 March Hussein of Jordan removes General John Glubb as Arab Legion chief
March United States and Britain launch plan to weaken Egypt
19 July United States withdraw loan offer to finance Aswan High Dam
26 July Egypt nationalizes Suez Canal
10 August Britain and France plan to capture Alexandria; advance on Cairo (operation
“Musketeer”)  

11 August  General Charles Keightley designated Supreme Allied Commander  
4 September  British government receives information about two Soviet submarines which left the Baltic manned by Russians and Egyptians  
9 September  Britain and France change emphasis: operation “Musketeer” becomes Revise  
11 September  Eisenhower rules out US involvement in use of force  
23 September  Britain and France refer dispute over Suez channel to UN Security Council  
24 September  Egypt complains to Security Council about Anglo-French troop concentrations  
5 October  Israel develops a plan (Kadesh) for Sinai conquest  
22 - 24 October  Sevres meetings: Israel, France, and Britain plan their Egyptian campaign  
24 October  Israel mobilizes reserves  
25 October  Israel revises Kadesh, in keeping with Sevres meeting  
26 October  Israel begins emergency mobilization  
29 October  Carriers Bulwark, Eagle, and Arromanches leave Malta  
29 October  Israel mobilizes reserves  
29 October  Israeli forces attack Mitla Pass  
30 October  Israeli forces capture Ras an-Nagb  
30 October  Israeli forces capture al-Qusaymah  
30 October  Israeli forces repulsed at Umm Shihan  
5 October  Britain demands Israel and Egypt withdraw 16km (10 miles) from Suez Canal  
5 October  Israeli forces reach west flank of Ruafa  
5 October  Israeli forces rendezvous near Mitla Pass

Map of Sinai Peninsula

Source: Library of Congress (http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/egypt/eg05_01a.pdf)
Links

- Nasser's speech on the Suez Canal and negotiations with Britain and France
- The Suez Canal A History: http://www.mideastweb.org/suez_canal_history.htm
- Suez Crisis: Key players: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/5195582.stm
- Peter L. Hahn. The Suez Crisis. A Crisis That Changed the Balance of Power in the Middle East.
  http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itps/0406/ijpe/hahn.htm

Film Material

- “Suez Canal Seized by Egyptians” Universal International News from 1956/07/30
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fgo_KyuT7pY&feature=related
- “Suez Crisis. British, French Rush Warships to Area” Universal International News from 1956/08/06
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4I1ZEY-mtepW&feature=related
- “Ike Urges Caution on Seizure of Suez” Universal International News from 1956/08/09
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHp1m-P-DGbyk

Documents


Bibliography

- Herzog, Chaim: The Arab Israeli Wars. War and Peace in the Middle East from the War of Independence