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Concise Timeline

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This page outlines only the principal events that shaped the crisis leading to the 1967 War - good for quick reference, but much detail is missing.

NOTE: THERE ARE MANY MORE USEFUL QUOTE IN THE [FULL TIMELINE](#). The latter recreates the rising tension around the world, documenting both what happened in the Middle East and reaction around the rest of the world.

The two timelines are interconnected - click on any date here to explore that aspect in more depth, then click a date to return to this version.

NOTE: If you clicking a reference below it brings up a fresh window. To continue browsing just click on the main timeline to hide the reference window.

[Jan - March 1967](#)

In the first quarter of 1967 there were over 270 border "incidents", mainly emanating from Syria, which caused rising concern in Israel.

[April 7th 1967](#)

Syrian gunners fired from their Golan Heights position on an Israeli tractor farming in the demilitarised zone. Artillery fire was exchanged and the fight escalated. Israel sent airplanes against the Syrian gun positions and several Syrian villages. The Syrians sent up MiG jets and an all-out dogfight ensued – Israel downed six Syrian MiG 21 fighters and chased the remainder all the way back to Damascus. [\[2\]](#)

[May 13th 1967](#)

Soviets misinform Anwar Sadat in Moscow that Israel is massing 10-12 brigades in preparation for an attack on Syria, supposedly to take place May 17.

[May 14th 1967](#)

Israel learns that Egyptian troops have been put on alert and begun reinforcing units in the Sinai .

[May 15th 1967](#)

Israel responds by ordering some regular armoured units to reinforce the Sinai front and drafted a message to ensure Egypt understood that Israel was responding to Egyptian actions and not massing troops on its own initiative: **“Israel wants to make it clear to the government of Egypt that it has no aggressive intentions whatsoever against any Arab state at all”** [\[4\]](#)

[May 16th 1967](#)

Nasser demands withdrawal of 3,400 man UN Emergency Force (UNEF)

Egypt now has a further 30,000 troops to the 30-35 thousand permanently stationed on the peninsula, plus 200 tanks, and it was continuing to pour in more troops all the time. [9]

[May 17th 1967](#)

A series of emergency meetings was held by the Cabinet in Israel. There was great apprehension when head of Israeli military intelligence, Major General Aharon Yariv, reported to army headquarters, apparently mistakenly, that the Egyptian army was equipped with poison gas (Israel was unprepared for chemical warfare). [3]

“All Egypt is now prepared to plunge into total war which will put an end to Israel” - *Cairo Radio*

[May 18th 1967](#)

“The Zionist barrack in Palestine is about to collapse and be destroyed. Every one of the hundred million Arabs has been living for the past nineteen years on one hope – to live to see the day Israel is liquidated...There is no life, no peace nor hope for the gangs of Zionism to remain in the occupied land.”

“As of today, there no longer exists an international emergency force to protect Israel....The sole method we shall apply against Israel is a total war which will result in the extermination of Zionist existence”. - *Cairo Radio's Voice of the Arabs broadcast*

UN Secretary General U Thant sent cable to Cairo advising that UNEF would be withdrawn. He added the rider: **“Irrespective of the reasons for the actions you have taken, in all frankness, may I advise you that I have serious misgivings about it for...I believe that this Force has been an important factor in maintaining the relative quiet in the area of its deployment during the past ten years and that its withdrawal may have grave implications for peace.”** - *Charles W Yost "How it Began", Foreign Affairs, Winter 1968*

The UK were deeply upset at the U Thant caving in without bringing the matter to the UN General Assembly: **It really makes a mockery of the peacekeeping work of the United Nations if, as soon as the tension rises, the United Nations force it told to leave. Indeed the collapse of UNEF might well have repercussions on other United Nations peacekeeping forces, and the credibility of the United Nations in this field are thrown into question.” ...“UNEF was established with the full concurrence of the United Nations...any decision to withdraw the force should be taken in the United Nations after full consultation with all the countries involved – it should not be taken as the result of some unilateral decision.”** - *George Brown (British Foreign Secretary), speaking at United Nations Association annual dinner in London [21]*

[May 19th 1967](#)

“I do not want to cause alarm but it is difficult for me not to warn the Council that, as I see it, the position in the Middle East is more disturbing...indeed more menacing than at any time since the fall of 1956.” - *UN Secretary General U Thant, Security Council meeting.*

- *U.N. S/7906 26th May 1967*

Now an estimated 40 thousand Egyptian troops and 500 tanks in the Sinai. Israel ordered an immediate large-scale mobilization of reserves.[5]

[May 20th 1967](#)

“Our forces are now entirely ready not only to repulse the aggression, but to initiate the act of liberation itself, and to explode the Zionist presence in the Arab homeland”. - *Syria's Defence Minister Hafez Assad (later to be Syria's President).*

Egypt and Israel faced each other directly tonight as the United Nations Emergency Force, which had stood between them for more than ten years, began its official withdrawal.[\[23\]](#)

[May 22nd 1967](#)

Egypt's President Nasser announced: **“The Israeli flag shall not go through the Gulf of Aqaba. Our sovereignty over the entrance to the Gulf cannot be disputed”.**

"We want a full scale, popular war of liberation... to destroy the Zionist enemy" - *Syrian president Dr. Nureddin al-Attasi speech to troops* [\[6\]](#)

"Israel today proposed a mutual reduction in troop concentrations in the Middle East, while its Arab neighbours laid plans to strengthen still further their forces round her borders..." - *The Times* [\[26\]](#)

[May 23rd 1967](#)

Egypt closed the Straits of Tiran (Gulf of Aqaba) to Israeli shipping, thereby cutting off Israel's only supply route with Asia and stopping the flow of oil from its main supplier, Iran. By international law, this was an act of war. (Reported that day in every newspaper in the world - see report in [The Times](#))

President Johnson tonight condemned the Arab blockade of Israel shipping in the Gulf of Aqaba as **"illegal and potentially disastrous to the cause of peace" ... "The purported closing of the Gulf of Aqaba has brought a new and grave dimension to the crisis. The United States considers the gulf to be an international waterway."** ...Mr Johnson condemned the "hurried withdrawal" of the United Nations emergency force from Gaza and Sinai, and the "recent build-up of military forces in the area". - [Times May 24th 1967 full text here](#)

[May 24th 1967](#)

Israel's foreign minister Abba Eban met with UK Prime Minister Harold Wilson at 10 Downing Street. Wilson revealed that the Cabinet had met that morning and concluded that Egypt's blockade **“must not be allowed to triumph; Britain would join with others in an effort to open the Straits.”**

[May 26th 1967](#)

“Taking over Sharm el Sheikh meant confrontation with Israel (and) also meant that we were ready to enter a general war with Israel. The battle will be a general one and our basic objective will be to destroy Israel” - Gamal Abdel Nasser speech to the General Council of the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions

- *broadcast in Arabic by Cairo Radio's Voice of the Arabs, Gamal Abdel Nasser, 19.35 GMT, 26th May 1967 (the speech made front page news in The Times May 27th)* [Full text here](#)

[May 27th 1967](#)

Nasser cancels a planned Egyptian attack on Israel (Operation Fajr - Dawn), planned for following day, after it became obvious that the Israelis knew about the plan.

The NY Times reported that Jordan would admit Saudi and Iraqi forces into its country to do battle with Israel

[May 28th 1967](#)

“The existence of Israel is in itself an aggression...what happened in 1948 was an aggression – an aggression against the Palestinian people. ... (the crisis had developed because) “Eshkol threatened to march on Damascus, occupy Syria and overthrow the Syrian regime. It was our duty to come to the aid of our Arab brother. It was our duty to ask for the withdrawal of UNEF. When UNEF went, we had to go to the Gulf of Aqaba and restore things to what they were when we were in Aqaba in 1956” - Gamel Abdel Nasser at a press conference for several hundred of the World’s press. [9]

“We will not accept any...coexistence with Israel....Today the issue is not the establishment of peace between the Arab states and Israel....The war with Israel is in effect since 1948”. - Gamel Abdel Nasser press conference

[May 29th 1967](#)

“Now, eleven years after 1956 we are restoring things to what they were in 1956...The issue now at hand is not the Gulf of Aqaba, the Straits of Tiran or the withdrawal of UNEF, but the rights of the Palestinian people.” - Nasser speech to General Assembly in Cairo:

- Vance, Vick, and Pierre Lauer: Hussein of Jordan. London: Peter Owen, 1968

[May 30th 1967](#)

Jordan signed a mutual defense treaty with Egypt, thereby joining the military alliance already in place between Egypt and Syria.

Jordanian forces were given to the command of an Egyptian General.

"The armies of Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon are poised on the borders of Israel ... to face the challenge, while standing behind us are the armies of Iraq, Algeria, Kuwait, Sudan and the whole Arab nation. This act will astound the world. Today they will know that the Arabs are arranged for battle, the critical hour has arrived. We have reached the stage of serious action and not of more declarations." - Gamal Abdel Nasser speech

Israel called upon Jordan numerous times to refrain from hostilities. Hussein, however, was caught on the horns of a galling dilemma: allow Jordan to be dragged into war and face the brunt of the Israeli response, or remain neutral and risk full-scale insurrection among his own people. Army Commander-in-Chief General Sharif Zaid Ben Shaker warned in a press conference that **"If Jordan does not join the war a civil war will erupt in Jordan"**. [13]

[May 31st 1967](#)

“The existence of Israel is an error which must be rectified. This is our opportunity to wipe out the ignominy which has been with us since 1948. Our goal is clear - to wipe Israel off the map” - President Aref of Iraq

[June 1st 1967](#)

“Brethren and sons, this is the day of the battle to avenge our martyred brethren who fell in 1948. It is the day to wash away the stigma. We shall, God willing, meet in Tel Aviv and Haifa” - Radio broadcast by Iraqi President Abdel Rahman Aref

- 11.00 GMT June 1st 1967, Baghdad Domestic Service in Arabic , Foreign Broadcast Information Service

“Those who survive will remain in Palestine. I estimate that none of them will survive.” - [Ahmed Shukairy*](#) (see note below), chairman of PLO in Jordanian Jerusalem, asked in news interview what will happen to the Israelis if there is a war [1]

Levi Eshkol, Prime Minister of Israel, sent message to Russian Premiere Kosygin: **“... I invited your Ambassador in Israel to visit the frontier to find out for himself that there was no truth in this allegation. To my regret, the Ambassador did not respond to our invitation. The Chief of Staff of the UNTSO checked these claims and informed the Secretary-General of the UN and the capitals of the region that there were no Israel concentrations on the Syrian border.”** [17]

[June 3rd 1967](#)

MILITARY BUILD-UP: By this time Egypt had 210,000 troops ready for deployment, with 100,000 of them with 930 tanks ready in the Sinai. They had 30 Tu-16 Russian-made bombers, which were a threat to Israel's cities. Overall the Egyptian Air Force, by far the largest and the most modern of all the Arab air forces, consisting of about 450 combat aircraft, all Soviet-built and relatively new.

Syria had 63,000 troops and Jordan 55,000 – totalling 328,000 troops ready to fight Israel. The Arabs had twice the number of tanks compared to Israel (2,330 against 1000) and far more combat aircraft too (682 compared to Israel's 286); They had 1,845 armoured personnel carriers compared to Israel's 1,500.

However, by fully mobilizing Israel could muster 250,000 men. Israel would need to rely on the training and motivation of this largely civilian army to counter the numeric superiority of the Arabs in manpower and weaponry. [15]

Israel's newly-appointed Defence Minister Moshe Dayan, wishing to confine hostilities if possible to the imminent battles against Egypt, ordered the Israeli Army not to open a second front with Jordan in the West Bank in the event of war. He instructed the head of the Israeli Army Central Command: “You must not do anything to entangle Israel with the Jordanians...” [6]

[June 5th 1967](#)

MILITARY BUILD-UP: Seven to eight Egyptian division, two of them armoured, now deployed in Sinai: 200 tanks opposite Eilat, with the aim of cutting off the Southern Negev. Along Israel's Eastern border: 60,000 Jordanian soldiers and 300 tanks. The Jordanian army placed under Egyptian command units, as well as Iraq forces which had entered its territory. On Israel's Northern border with Syria, 50,000 Syrian soldiers dug in, fortified and protected by concrete and steel. Some 600 Egyptian, Jordanian, Syrian and Iraqi planes ready.

War broke out on 5 June when Israel responded to the Egyptian military build-up by launching a surprise attack on Egypt's air force, destroying most of it on the ground within a matter of hours.

That same morning, Israel sent a message to Jordan's leader King Hussein via the US State Department, the UN and the British Foreign Office, saying that, despite the outbreak of war, it would not attack the West Bank if Jordan maintained quiet on that front.

Jordan ignored Israel's appeal to avoid conflict.

That morning, King Hussein received false information from Egypt denying Egyptian losses and claiming a massive and successful Egyptian attack against Israel. Emboldened by this information, Jordan launched immediate multiple attacks on Israel:-

- civilian suburbs of Tel-Aviv were shelled by artillery;
- Israel's largest military airfield, Ramat David, was shelled;
- Jordanian warplanes attacked the central Israeli towns of Netanya and Kfar Sava;

- thousands of mortar shells rained down on West Jerusalem hitting civilian locations indiscriminately, including the Hadassah Hospital and the Mount Zion Church;
- Israel's parliament building (the Knesset) and the Prime Minister's office, each in Israeli-controlled West Jerusalem, were targeted;
- 20 Israelis died in these attacks; 1000 were wounded. 900 buildings in West Jerusalem were damaged.
- "Jerusalem is totally engulfed in war..." reported the British Consul-General that morning.
- All this happened before Israel reacted militarily against Jordan, or moved at all into the West Bank.

NOTE: Israel's entry into the West Bank in June 1967 was not part of a premeditated Israeli plan for territorial expansion. Quite the opposite: Israel's own Defence Minister instructed the army not to fight the Jordanians, or move into the West Bank. That position only changed as a result of Jordan's disregard for Israeli appeals to avoid hostilities, and by its intensive bombardment of Israeli targets. Israel's entry into the West Bank was an act of self-defence. Its presence there originates as a result, not of Israeli aggression, but of Jordanian aggression. [\[16\]](#)

[June 19th](#)

US President Lyndon Johnson declared: **"If a single act of folly was more responsible for this explosion than any other it was the arbitrary and dangerous announced decision that the Straits of Tiran would be closed. The right of innocent, maritime passage must be preserved for all nations"**.

[Sept 1st 1967](#)

Arab summit conference in Khartoum during August 29 - September 1, 1967, formulated the [Khartoum Resolutions](#). It stated: no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel and no negotiations with Israel.

*NOTE: **AHMED SHUKEIRY** - formerly an aide to the late Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini. The Mufti notoriously sought friendship with Hitler during World War 2, requesting: " ... **to settle the question of Jewish elements in Palestine and other Arab countries in accordance with the national and racial interests of the Arabs and along the lines similar to those used to solve the Jewish question in Germany and Italy.**" He got as far as planning a concentration camp, near Tel Aviv. He was also responsible for recruiting Balkan Muslims for infamous SS "mountain divisions" that tried to wipe out Jewish communities throughout the region.[\[19\]](#)]

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