

6 Days War: Crucial quotes

March 8th 1965

"We shall not enter Palestine with its soil covered in sand, we shall enter it with its soil saturated in blood" - *President of Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser* [\[20\]](#)

[Feb 22nd 1967](#)

"it is the duty of all of us now to move from defensive positions to offensive positions and enter the battle to liberate the usurped land...Everyone must face the test and enter the battle to the end." - *President Attassi of Syria*[\[1\]](#)

[April 8th 1967](#)

"(this battle will be)...followed by more severe battles until Palestine is liberated and the Zionist presence ended." - *Syria's information minister Mahmoud Zubi* [\[1\]](#)

[May 12th 1967](#)

"In view of the fourteen incidents of sabotage and infiltration perpetrated in the past month alone, Israel may have no other choice but to adopt suitable countermeasures against the focal points of sabotage. Israel will continue to take action to prevent any and all attempts to perpetrate sabotage within her territory. There will be no immunity for any state which aids or abets such acts." - *PM Levi Eshkol speech* [\[10\]](#)

[May 13th 1967](#)

Egypt must expect **"an Israeli invasion of Syria immediately after Independence Day, with the aim of overthrowing the Damascus regime"** [\[10\]](#) *Soviet misinformation delivered to Anwar Sadat in Moscow.*

[May 15th 1967](#)

"Israel wants to make it clear to the government of Egypt that it has no aggressive intentions whatsoever against any Arab state at all" - *Israel's Prime Minister Levi Eshkol* [\[4\]](#)

[May 16th 1967](#)

'...I gave my instructions to all UAR forces to be ready for action against Israel the moment it might carry out any aggressive action against any Arab country. Due to these instructions our troops are already concentrated in Sinai on our eastern border. For the sake of the complete security of all UN troops...I request that you issue your orders to withdraw all troops immediately. [\[5\]](#) - *written request from Nasser to Commander UNEF (Gaza)*

"The existence of Israel has continued too long. We welcome the Israeli aggression. We welcome the battle we have long awaited. The peak hour has come. The battle has come in which we shall destroy Israel." - *Cairo Radio*

[May 17th 1967](#)

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

"We had hoped yesterday that tension in the Israel-Syria-UAR triangle was dropping after an ostentatious Egyptian show of putting its forces around Cairo on alert. Last night, however, we and the Israelis learned that the Egyptians have moved forces into the Sinai. Now they have moved forces in front of the UN Emergency Force on the Israel-UAR border and all but ordered it to withdraw." - *Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson* [\[30 Doc 7\]](#)

[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*

“Egypt has decided to terminate the presence of the United Nations Emergency Force from the territory of the United Arab Republic and Gaza Strip. Therefore I request that the necessary steps be taken for the withdrawal of the Force as soon as possible.” - *Egyptian ambassador Kony informs U Thant - U.N.* A/6730/Add.3 26th June 1967

“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.” - *UN Secretary General U Thant cables Cairo advising that UNEF would be withdrawn.*

“The presence of the Emergency Forces in the Sinai desert had kept tensions down. We don't have to look further for a United Nations success. Yet the Government of the United Arab Republic has made a formal request for the withdrawal of UNEF from its territory as soon as possible.

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.” - *George Brown (British Foreign Secretary), speaking at United Nations Association annual dinner in London* [\[21\]](#)

...”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* [\[21\]](#)

"You are correct, Mr. President, in stating that we are having our patience tried to the limits. There have been 15 attempts at murder and sabotage in the past six weeks. We have not reacted. This in itself proves that there is no lack of temperance and responsibility on our part. On the other hand, the problem is not solved indefinitely by inaction. We cannot always rely on the stroke of fortune which has so far prevented the terrorist acts from taking the toll of life and injury intended by the perpetrators. - *extract from telegram from Eshkol to Pres. LB Johnson.*

[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*

Israel [will] not initiate hostilities **"...until or unless (Egyptian forces) close the Straits of Tiran to free navigation by Israel"** - *Prime Minister Levi Eshkol message to France's President de Gaulle.*

"Israel would stop at nothing to cancel the blockade. It is essential that President Nasser should not have any illusions." - *Eshkol tells leading maritime powers*

"Our intention to regard the closing of the Straits as a *casus belli* was communicated...to the foreign ministers of those states which had supported international navigation in the Straits in 1957 and thereafter. There can be no doubt that these warnings reached Cairo. One thing was now clear. If Nasser imposed a blockade, the explosion would ensue not from 'miscalculation', but from an open-eyed and conscious readiness for war." - *Abba Eban* [\[10\]](#)

[May 20th 1967](#)

"Our forces are now entirely ready not only to repulse any aggression, but to initiate the act ourselves, and to explode the Zionist presence in the Arab homeland of Palestine. The Syrian army, with its finger on the trigger, is united. I believe that the time has come to begin a battle of annihilation." - *Syria's Defence Minister Hafez Assad (later to be Syria's President).*

[May 22nd 1967](#)

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

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

[May 23rd 1967](#)

"[The Arab blockade of Israel shipping in the Gulf of Aqaba is] 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." *President LB Johnson - Times May 24th 1967 full text here*

[May 24th 1967](#)

"[Egypt's blockade] must not be allowed to triumph; Britain would join with others in an effort to open the Straits." - *UK Prime Minister Harold Wilson to Israel's foreign minister Abba Eban*

[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*

[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](#)

"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

[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

“Under the terms of the military agreement signed with Jordan, Jordanian artillery, coordinated with the forces of Egypt and Syria, is in a position to cut Israel in two at Qalqilya, where Israeli territory between the Jordan armistice line and the Mediterranean Sea is only 12 kilometres wide”. - Al Akhbar, Cairo's daily newspaper

UK Parliamentary debate regarding the hasty removal of the United Nations Emergency Force:

"Taking the fire brigade away just when fire was about to burst out" - Foreign Secretary George Brown

“Entirely incomprehensible” - Edward Heath.

“a fatal and perhaps fateful error of judgment” “...this was the last chance for the United Nations to get a grip on themselves and apply the principles of their Charter” - Sir Alec Douglas-Home

“...the first casualty (of this crisis) had been the United Nations. It would need an immense effort, an almost superhuman effort, to restore the prestige of that organization” - Sir Alec Douglas-Home

" ...they could not expect the people of Israel, who have done nothing wrong, to sit for a prolonged period until the pincer movement had got them so entrapped that they could not go on." - Sir Barnett Janner

"The characteristic of this situation is the declared aim of one side not to win concessions from the other. Their demand is that Israel should cease to exist - indeed has never existed. ...What had to be sought

was not merely how to avoid war but to create the conditions of peace. One condition of a lasting peace must be the recognition that Israel has a right to live. Israel had been for nearly 20 years a member of the United Nations entitled to the respect and protection of the United Nations." - *Prime Minister Harold Wilson The Times* [27]

[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](#), chairman of PLO in Jordanian Jerusalem, asked in news interview what will happen to the Israelis if there is a war

"When the organs of Arab propaganda raised the contention that Israel is concentrating forces in order to attack Syria, 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. The Secretary-General even included a statement to this effect in the Report he submitted on May 19th to the Security Council." - Levi Eshkol, Prime Minister of Israel, to Russian Premiere Kosygin [17]

[June 2nd 1967](#)

"We will coordinate efforts of the PLO with responsible authorities in Jordan in all fields – politically, militarily and materially..." **"It was very probable that the Jordan army might start the battle."** - [Ahmed Shukairy](#) - *The Times*, Nicholas Herbert, Amman, June 1st

[June 3rd 1967](#)

"You must not do anything to entangle Israel with the Jordanians..." - Israel's newly-appointed Defence Minister Moshe Dayan, instructs the head of the Israeli Army Central Command [6]

[June 4th 1967](#) to the Zionist trap of supporting Israel in the present crisis.

"There are no words I can use to express my disappointment at the attitude that the British Government has taken with regard to the Gulf of Aqaba - King Husain of Jordan, press conference in Amman - The Times, June 5th 1967 p4, Nicholas Herbert, Amman "WARNING TO BRITAIN BY KING HUSAIN: Danger of losing Arab friends"

[June 6th 1967](#)

"I have just come from Jerusalem to tell the Security Council that Israel, by its independent effort and sacrifice, has passed from serious danger to successful resistance.

Two days ago Israel's condition caused much concern across the humane and friendly world. Israel had reached a sombre hour. Let me try to evoke the point at which our fortunes stood.

An army, greater than any force ever assembled in history in Sinai, had massed against Israel's southern frontier. Egypt had dismissed the United Nations forces which symbolized the international interest in the maintenance of peace in our region. Nasser had provocatively brought five infantry divisions and two armoured divisions up to our very gates; 80,000 men and 900 tanks were poised to move." - Abba Eban,

Israel's Foreign Minister addresses UN Security Council[full text here](#)

[June 14th 1967](#)

"Wars are not always begun by shots. They are often begun by action and the action which really created the state of war in an acute sense was the imposition of the blockade. To try to murder somebody by strangulation is just as much attempted murder as if you tried to murder him by a shot, and therefore the act of strangulation was the first violent, physical act which had its part in the sequence. But also on that Monday morning we acted against the movement of forces. The Egyptian air force had been making incursions into Israel before, whether for reconnaissance or for other reasons, but there had been a pattern of encroachment. One never knows when aircraft come towards you what their intention is.

A document which we subsequently captured revealed a very instructive picture. The Egyptian command was taking a very intense interest in the disposition of Israel's very few airfields. They wanted to know where they were, and there was an operation plan, which I read to the Security Council, about how to knock them out. My impression is, therefore, that those aircraft which appeared on our radar screens that Monday morning were the start of an operation against our air fields. Whether they were to make the first reconnaissance move or the first knock-out is not relevant in this era of war. But we acted against movement towards us in the air." - Abba Eban TV broadcast [18]

[June 19th 1967](#)

"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" - US President Lyndon Johnson

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