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Arab-Israeli Conflict: The Next Several Days

The immediate objective of the Israelis has been to contain the attacking Arab forces while mobilizing their reserves. At the time the Syrians and the Egyptians launched their offensives, the Israelis were only a few hours into mobilization. For the past two days, Israel's regular ground forces--about 100,000 men--have been absorbing the Arab thrusts. Full mobilization of Israel's reserves--bringing the force to some 300,000 men--is scheduled to be completed by noon today. Counterattacks are already reported to have begun.

The outlook for the next few days is one of heavy fighting on all fronts. With the full weight of their forces behind them, the Israelis should now be able to turn the situation around on the Golan Heights by nightfall Tuesday. Pressing the offensive against the Syrians might take another day or two. By week's end the Heights should be cleared of Syrian forces. Against the Egyptians, the Israelis are today just beginning to press their armor. They reportedly are driving hard and by Tuesday or Wednesday the effect of their counterattack should be clear. Several more days of heavy fighting might follow as the Israelis work to destroy as much as possible of Egypt's Army.

Note: This paper was prepared jointly by CIA and DIA

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The Syrian Front

Current Situation

The Syrians threw the weight of three infantry and two armored divisions against the Israeli force in the occupied Golan Heights that was equivalent to about a division. The Syrians probably committed about a thousand tanks against the fewer than 200 tanks the Israelis had in the Golan Heights area when fighting broke out. For this investment of men and machines, the Syrians have gained fewer than a dozen kilometers of ground at the deepest point. While the Syrians failed to drive the Israelis off the Heights, the Israelis admit substantial losses in their original committed forces in the area. In addition, the Syrians have downed some 35 aircraft-- a rate of attrition the Israelis cannot long sustain.

Despite the lack of an immediate Israeli rebuff to the Syrian offensive and the "grim" atmosphere in Israeli command headquarters, the IDF appears to have taken the initiative. The Israelis kept minimal forces on the Heights and planned to fight a holding action if attacked. That holding action appears to have been successful. Aircraft losses have, however, been heavy--perhaps heavier than anticipated.

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Forecast

On the Golan Heights, the Israelis will probably set their major counterattack in motion today. It is possible that the Israelis have disengaged their forces on the Heights both to give the air force room to attack the Syrians, as they have said, and to organize the counter offensive. The very heavy Israeli air attacks on Syrian forces today may be the softening up preceding the main effort. If so, the next two or three days will see heavy fighting as the Israelis (1) eliminate the Syrian advances of the first three days and (2) seek to inflict maximum materiel and personnel losses on the Syrians.

The outcome of the fighting on the Golan Heights should become clear today, or, at the latest, by Tuesday. Several days of mopping up operations are likely after the main battle. The most likely outcome of the crucial period is a Syrian collapse and general retreat across the cease fire lines. While the Israelis may pursue the retreating Syrians to increase Arab losses, Israel is unlikely to want to increase the occupation burden by taking significantly more territory. Some minor adjustments in the cease fire lines are likely as the Israelis will almost certainly want to minimize the possibility of the present situation repeating itself.

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The Egyptian Front

Current Situation

The Egyptian forces on the east side of the canal may soon be isolated. Israeli air and ground forces are attacking the Egyptian lodgement and trying to cut the bridges which form both the life line and escape route for the Egyptians. Israeli defense officials say the Egyptians are being pressed very hard. Egyptian government radio admits Israeli counterattacks have occurred but claims the attacks were repulsed with heavy damage inflicted on the Israelis.

If the Israeli claim to have crossed the canal is true--and we are inclined to accept it--the Israelis have several options open to them. Each option could be pursued based on the Israelis' assessment of the political costs and advantages, military risks, and assessment of their own capabilities. Three major options are outlined.

--Israeli armored forces on the west side of the canal may attempt to move rapidly along the canal's edge, doing as much damage as they could. This raid--reminiscent of the Israeli raid along the Egyptian Red Sea coast in September 1969--could be over in a day or so, cause considerable damage, and bring about the collapse of the Egyptian forces on the east bank of the canal.

--At the next higher level of risk the Israelis might try to penetrate more deeply into Egypt. If they went 20 miles or so deep, the Israelis could capture or destroy many of the SAM sites and equipment which have been in place since 1970. The Israelis could also destroy or disrupt a large part of Egypt's army as well as bring about the collapse of the Egyptian force on the east bank. This is a risky course because the Israelis would be fighting their way through an area where Egyptian troops are deployed in fortified positions. Israeli casualties could be numerous and the chances for a costly blunder would be high. In addition, the Israelis would, for the first time, be fighting inside Egypt proper.

--Finally, most risky and least likely, the Israelis could penetrate some 30 or more miles, encircle

the area and try to hold it for a few days. This would enable the Israelis to capture large stocks of materiel including the bulk of the SAM system deployed near the canal. If successful, such a tactic would crush the Egyptians even more convincingly than in 1967. The risk of heavy casualties and serious mistakes, however, would be great.

In any event, the Israelis have now clearly gone over to the offensive. The Israelis will likely defeat the Egyptian force on the east bank within two or three days. The scattered commando and heliborne troops the Egyptians sent into the Sinai present no more than a minor security hazard and are being pursued even now. The Israelis probably will have destroyed the Egyptian presence in the Sinai before the week is out.

Other Reactions

In word and deed, the Soviets continue to stay well clear of the fighting. The bulk of the Soviet Mediterranean Squadron had been grouped back from the combat zone near Crete. Evacuation flights continued into Aleppo--in northern Syria--during the morning of 8 October. There have been no signs of unusual activity by Soviet forces in other areas of the world.

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Party chief Brezhnev, speaking at a luncheon for visiting Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka today, summed up the very limited nature of Soviet support for the Arab cause. He placed the blame for the fighting on Israel, but offered only "sympathy" for the Arabs. He said "all countries and peoples of the area" should have guaranteed security and pledged that the USSR is prepared to make its contribution to lasting peace. A Soviet government statement issued yesterday made most of the same points and, in separate conversations, Soviet officials in Paris and Moscow have gone out of their way to emphasize that the present situation must not affect the general improvement in US-Soviet relations.

We expect Moscow to render political support to the Arabs at the UN and elsewhere, but even if the military situation turns seriously against Arab forces we doubt the Soviets will risk direct involvement. The evidence of growing differences in Soviet-Arab relations--much of which predates the present fighting--and the priority Moscow attaches to its relations with the US, suggest that the Soviets will be more cautious than they were in 1967 about mounting another major effort to re-equip the Arabs.

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Other Arab countries have provided varying degrees of support. Moroccan troops are engaged in support of the Syrians on the Golan front, and both Algeria and Iraq claim to have provided air units to Syria. Sudan is reported to have transferred additional ground forces to Egypt. Kuwait had a token unit in Egypt at the time hostilities began. The Libyan Mirage squadron, which is probably manned by Egyptians, was hit on the ground on Sunday. President Qadhafi appears to be holding back so far, stating Sunday night that although he was providing immediate financial support, he would not say when Libya would intervene. Jordan has redeployed some of its forces as a precaution against an Israeli attack, and claims to have shot down one Israeli aircraft that violated its airspace. The fedayeen in Lebanon are making their usual exaggerated claims of downing Israeli aircraft and attacking Israeli posts in the Mount Hermon area.

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Estimated Losses*

	<u>Israel</u>	<u>Arab</u>
Aircraft	45	60
Tanks	100	500
Ships (primarily patrol craft)	-	6
Troops	<u>700</u>	2,000

* Israeli aircraft losses are fairly firm and are based on Israeli admissions. There are conflicting claims, however, and the Arabs claim 110 Israeli planes downed. The Arab aircraft losses are based on reported shoot-downs and possible losses as a result of Israeli air strikes on Egyptian and Syrian airfields, as derived from both Israeli claims and Egyptian admissions. The Syrians have made no statements about the number of aircraft lost during the war. It is not possible to ascertain the types of aircraft lost.

The tank figures are estimates based on field reporting. Personnel losses are extremely rough estimates of men killed and captured. While these estimates of losses have not been confirmed, they are consistent with the forces committed to battle and the intensity of fighting on the various fronts.

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ANNEX

The Soviet Military Advisors and Their Role

Prior to the outbreak of hostilities, we estimated the number of Soviet military advisors and technicians to be as follows:

Egypt	200
Syria	1,400
Iraq	500

Most of the military personnel in Egypt were involved in non-operational tasks such as training and maintenance. In Syria, however, some Soviet advisors were involved in operational aspects of the air defense system. In addition, there were economic and technical assistance people in all three countries--perhaps 500 in Egypt and a few thousand in Syria and Iraq.

Beginning on 4 October, however, the Soviets mounted a substantial evacuation effort that to date has involved some 37 flights to Egypt and Syria. Some Soviet naval ships apparently have also been used in the evacuation. Our reporting indicates the evacuation has been mainly for dependents, but that some civilian and military technicians are also involved. Some East European technicians and their dependents

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may also have been evacuated. The total capacity of the air evacuation alone would be about 3,500 people. We cannot say how many of those spaces were filled by military personnel. We assume some, but probably only a few.

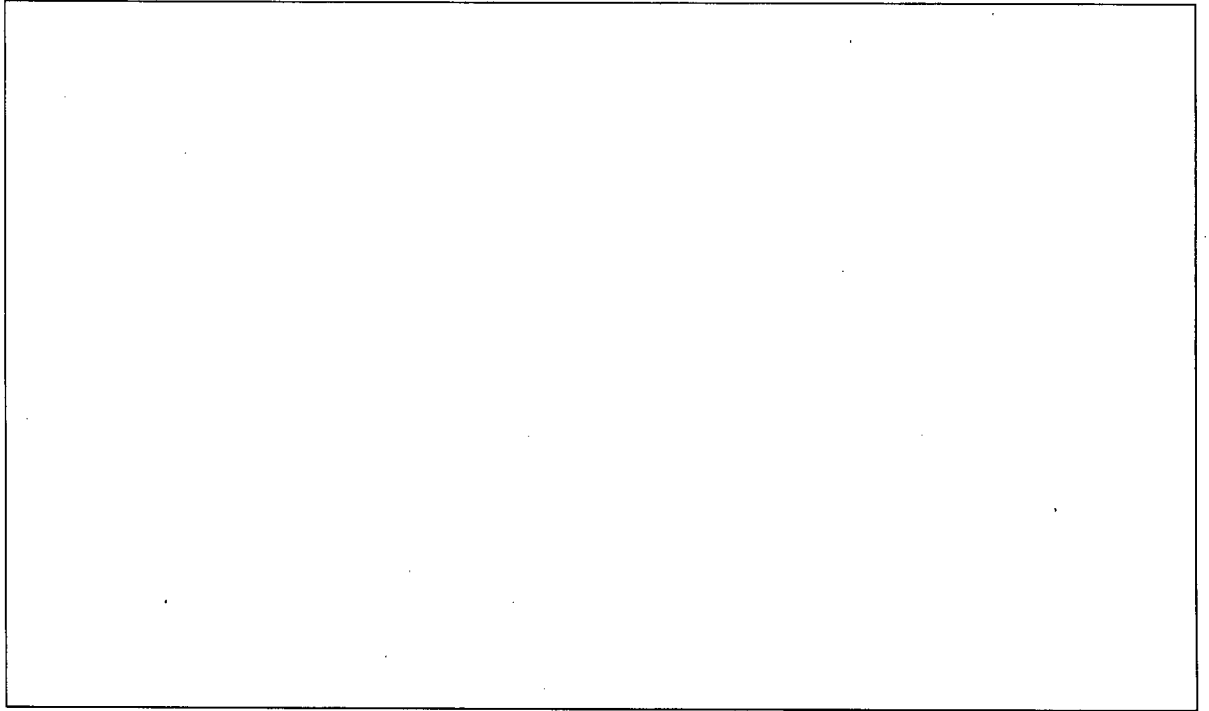
We think that Moscow wants to steer clear of military involvement in the fighting. This is indicated by the evacuation of Soviet personnel, the lack of any significant Soviet naval movement toward the battle zone, the lack of any Soviet resupply effort and Soviet diplomatic and media comment on the fighting. In line with this policy, Soviet advisors have probably been ordered to stay clear of the fighting.

This seems certainly true in Egypt where the Soviets, in any case, were not on the operational level. a senior Egyptian government official commented yesterday (7 October) that "not one" Soviet advisor has had any role in the campaign and that none are in the Suez Canal battle zone.

In the case of Syria the evidence is less clear.

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Egyptian Bridgeheads on the East Bank of the Canal

By late Sunday, the Egyptians had apparently constructed some 11 bridges across the Suez Canal. The Israelis claim to have destroyed nine of these bridges.

The conflicting claims as to the number of bridges constructed probably is due to the time the various counts were made. The Egyptians evidently crossed only light forces on Saturday to gain and hold the bridgeheads. On Sunday morning, the armored divisions and other heavy units had not yet crossed. The bulk of the forces crossed late Sunday. The bridges evidently were not needed until the major elements of the force were ready to cross.

The first two bridges were thrown across the canal on Saturday the 6th--one south of the Great Bitter Lake at El Kubri and one in the north at El Firdan. By Sunday morning, according to Israeli

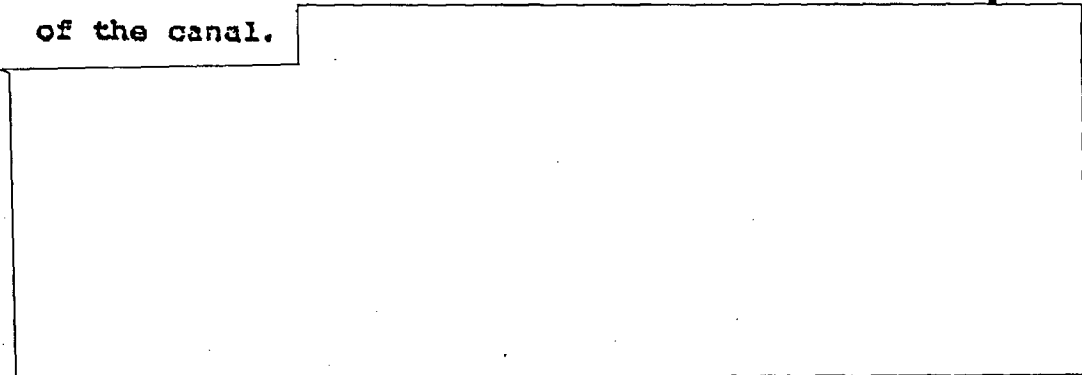
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Egyptian Forces on the East Bank

By Sunday evening, the Egyptians apparently had the elements of two armored divisions across the canal probably near Ismailiyah in the central sector of the canal. In addition, one armored brigade and one tank battalion were reported to have crossed in the north in the vicinity of Port Said. In sum, the Israelis claim that the Egyptians have 400 to 500 tanks across the canal--the bulk of which crossed on Sunday. The number of troops may be upwards of 20,000.

Egyptian infantry evidently crossed first on Saturday to establish the bridgeheads and since then have been consolidating their position on the eastern bank. The Egyptians did not advance much beyond the canal. One intercepted communication from an Egyptian unit places it within 6-7 km east of the canal.



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reports, the Egyptians had four bridges in operation (one of which the Israelis claim to have destroyed), but the bridge building continued and subsequent reports indicated that six bridges were in use later in the day.

The Egyptians have apparently constructed most of the bridges in the central sector of the canal near Ismailiyah--four were reported in this area. At least one bridge is in the north near El Qantara and at least two are in the southern sector between the Great Bitter Lake and the Gulf of Suez.

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