

History of the June 1967 “Six Day War”: Some Israeli Leaders Do Sometimes Tell The Truth

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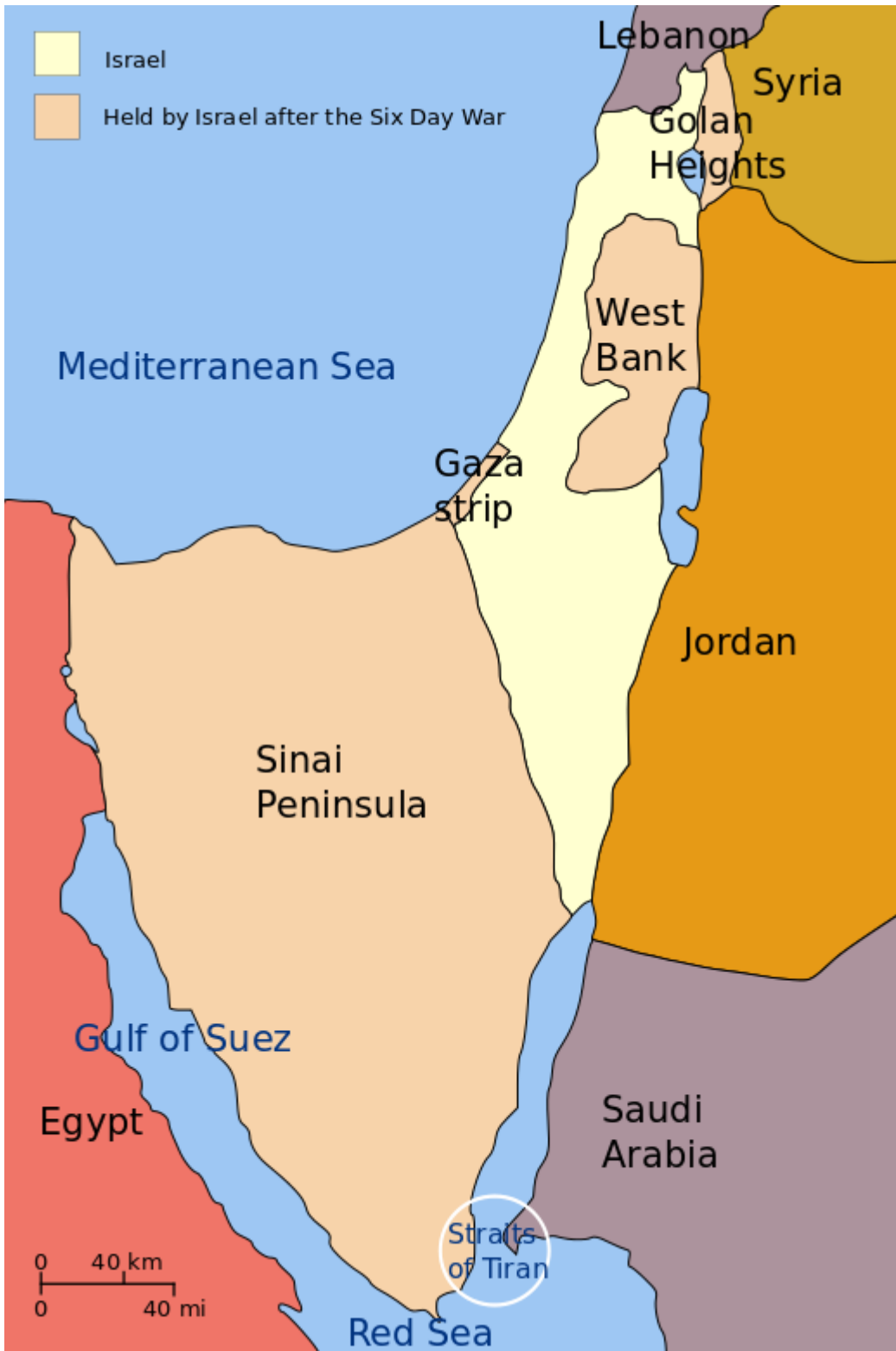
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Still today, 48 years on, there are relatively few people who know the whole truth about how Israel set the stage for war in June 1967 to grab more Arab land. The single most decisive event that made war inevitable happened on Thursday 1 June, four days before Israel launched its attacks. What was it?

On that day in Israel there was a coup organized and executed by the IDF's top generals and other security chiefs without a shot being fired. They required Prime Minister Levi Eshkol to form a unity government and bring into it as minister of defence Israel's one-eyed war lord, General Moshe Dayan. Up this point Eshkol had been both prime minister and minister of defence; and for two years Dayan had been in the political wilderness, devoting his time to archaeology. Effectively Eshkol was stripped of his command of Israel's war machine.

The problem with Eshkol for Israel's military and other security establishments was that he didn't want Israel to go to war because he knew the assertions of its hawks that the Arabs were about to attack were propaganda nonsense (more on this in a moment). He also understood and accepted the advice given to his foreign minister Abba Eban by French President Charles de Gaulle. In a conversation with Eban in Paris de Gaulle said **Israel should not go to war because, if it did, it would create Palestinian nationalism which would never go away.** (In my opinion that was the best advice anybody ever gave Israel).



But even more to the point was that Eshkol believed Israel should not take more Arab land and be prepared to make peace on the basis of the Zionist state's borders as they were.

And that was the main reason why the hawks, military and political, wanted Dayan as minister of defence (for which read attack) in a unity government. They knew he would take Israel to war to complete Zionism's unfinished business of 1948 - grabbing more Arab land including and especially the West Bank.

Another important aspect of the whole truth about how the stage was set for war in June 1967 is that **Israel set a trap for Egypt's President Nasser**. And the key to

understanding here is the fact that that on 4 November 1966 Egypt and Syria signed a Defence Agreement, in the hope on Nasser's part that it would enable him to prevent war.

The problem from then on for Nasser was that if Israel did attack Syria he would have to make a choice - either to be seen to be going to the defence of an Arab state under attack or to do nothing and lose face and his credibility as the leader of the (so-called) revolutionary Arab world.

It was after the signing of the Defence Agreement between Egypt and Syria that Israel began to set its trap for Nasser by provoking cross border shootings with Syria. These provocations climaxed on 7 April 1967 when, in the course of a seven-hour battle, Israeli mirages shot down six Syrian MIG 21s. Two of them were shot down over Damascus with the debris falling on the outskirts of the city. It was a very public humiliation for Syria's leaders.

After that Israel put extraordinary effort into making the Arab world and the Soviet Union believe that it was going to invade Syria at a time of its choosing. (I tell the full story of this great con in *America Takes Sides, War With Nasser Act II and the Creation of Greater Israel*, Chapter 1 of *Conflict Without End?*, the sub-title of Volume Three of my book *Zionism: The Real Enemy of the Jews*).

In reality the real purpose of Israel's provocations on the Syrian front and their supporting propaganda was to force Nasser to make a military move which Israel's hawks could present as proof that the Arabs were intending to attack Israel and that its very existence was in danger.

When Nasser ejected the UN peacekeepers, put two divisions into the Sinai right up to Israel's border and closed the Straits of Tiran, he had walked into Israel's trap. But he did so with both eyes open. He knew the Johnson administration knew that neither he nor any other Arab leader had any intention of attacking Israel, and that the actions he had taken and the deployments he had made were for face-saving reasons; and he invested his hope in the idea that U.S. would cause the growing crisis to be resolved by diplomacy. But Israel's hawks were never going to allow that to happen.

Let's now return to Dayan's hi-jacking of Israel's defence/war policy.

From the moment he became defence minister he demonstrated that he was **the** master (not a master) of deception.

On Friday 2 June, Dayan's second day as defence minister, the beach and streets of Tel Aviv (where many foreign correspondents were based in two hotels) were suddenly alive with soldiers returned from the frontlines. They were swimming, playing on the beach, strolling and drinking in the pavement cafes of Dizengorff Street. This was evidence - even proof - that Israel was not, after all, going to war. Contrary to expectations, Dayan was standing down the IDF. Now that he had the prime responsibility for Israel's security, he wanted to be seen to be giving diplomacy a chance. The two weeks of waiting since Nasser had closed the Straits of Tiran were ending with an anticlimax. Message: no war. Somehow the dovish Eshkol had finally got his way. Or so it seemed.

Most foreign correspondents were fooled. Some called for their bills and, after filing their "No war" stories, booked the first available flights out of Israel. Other battlefields were calling.

There were two reasons why I believed that the recall of many Israeli soldiers from their frontline positions was a brilliant Dayan deception strategy.

The first was the comment Dayan himself made to me. Because I had a source with highest level access to Israel's military and other security services I was aware two days before it happened that Dayan was going to be imposed on Eshkol. The day before his appointment I door-stepped him with my ITN camera crew. If I had asked him if war was coming, he would have ignored me and walked on without saying a word. So I settled for "What do you think the future holds?"

He stopped, gave me a big smile and made a gesture with the index finger of his right hand which supported his words. His reply was, "The desert is beckoning."

I said to myself and then my ITN crew, "That means war is very close."

That judgement was confirmed in my own mind by what I witnessed when just before midnight on Saturday 3 June I took a stroll through one of central Tel Aviv's main residential areas. The following is what I saw.

Away from the lights of the empty, quiet streets, blacked out, single-decker buses were strategically parked. The only sign of life in one was the glow of a driver's cigarette. Then, as though on cue, and actually following the script Dayan had written, apartment doors opened. The last hugs and kisses had obviously taken place inside. There were no goodbyes in the doorways. Just a quick burst of interior light as each door was opened and quickly shut again. Silently, in ones and twos, like ghosts, the soldiers who had come home on Thursday were returning to their frontline positions. As they neared their assigned buses, the ones and twos became groups. And they spoke not a word to each other. My "Shaloms" drew no response.

The following afternoon, Sunday 4 June, I sat at my typewriter in our suite on top of the Dan Hotel and composed a 40-second voice piece for ITN's main evening bulletin. I had to keep my story short because it was only a reporter's think-piece, speculation, and the Sunday evening bulletin was less than eight minutes including opening and closing titles and music. Forty seconds meant that I had only 120 words - three per second - to tell the story. My intro was: "For some reasons I can report, for others I cannot, I think the war is going to start tomorrow morning." And I signed off: "Alan Hart, ITN, Tel Aviv, on the eve of war."

I didn't think the military censor would let me say "Israel is going to war tomorrow morning", but since I was in Israel, that was my meaning, obviously.

The censor's office was in a building close to the Ministry of Defence. In the late afternoons for the past two weeks it had been a madhouse as scores of foreign correspondents scrambled to get their copy cleared to beat deadlines around the world. There was never any point in losing one's cool with Israeli military censors. Even if you thought their decisions were bizarre or stupid. But that didn't stop many reporters from shouting and screaming at them. On this particular afternoon there were no other reporters around - no war, no reporters - and there was only one censor instead of the usual three or four on duty.

He was a full colonel. He was sitting behind a post-office-like counter checking the Hebrew copy for Monday's Israeli newspapers. He didn't acknowledge my arrival or my greeting. He didn't look up. He merely raised his hand to take my copy. He read it, stamped it, signed it

and handed it back to me. Approved. No deletions. I was amazed. I said, “You’re sure I can broadcast this without getting in trouble with your superiors?”

For the first time the colonel looked up. There was an arrogance in his eyes and contempt in his voice. “You ought to know that Israel is a democracy”, he said. “We don’t censor opinion. Your story is opinion. You are free to express it. We censor only matters of a military nature that could be of use to our enemies.”

Shortly after that I sat in a small booth and delivered my text into a microphone for recording by ITN in London. My voice report would be overlaid with a picture of me and some library footage. One of the many good things about ITN was that it trusted the judgement of its reporters in the field. But... Later that evening I received the following cable from Hans Verhoven, the duty foreign editor who had really liked my piece. “REGRET YOUR GOOD SPECULATIVE STORY UNUSED STOP SQUEEZED OUT BY EVENTS STOP”

“Squeezed out” meant they had intended to run it. They had been prepared to back my judgement even though all other reporters and diplomats in the major capitals of the world were saying “No war”. But two civilian airliners had crashed – one in the English midlands and the other in France. From both locations there had been miles of dramatic film footage (moving pictures in every sense of the word) of the wreckage and distraught relatives of the dead and dying. My speculative story had not had a chance in a short Sunday evening bulletin.

At 07.45 the following morning Israel went to war. Fate had denied me the scoop of a war correspondent’s lifetime.

Israel’s immediate justification for its action was that it had been attacked by Egypt. When it quickly became obvious to all who mattered in the major capitals of the world that Israel was lying, the story changed. Israel had had to take pre-emptive action because the Arabs were going to attack. That, too, was propaganda nonsense.

In conclusion for now I’ll put some flesh on the bone of my headline for this article.

If the statement that the Arabs were not intending to attack Israel and that its existence was not in danger was only that of a *goy*, it could be dismissed by Zionists as anti-Semitic conjecture. In fact the truth of it has been admitted by some of the key Israeli players. Here is a short summary of some pertinent, post-war Israeli confessions.

In an interview published in *Le Monde* on 28 February 1968, Israeli Chief of Staff Rabin said this: **“I do not believe that Nasser wanted war. The two divisions which he sent into Sinai on 14 May would not have been enough to unleash an offensive against Israel. He knew it and we knew it.”**

On 14 April 1971, a report in the Israeli newspaper *Al-Hamishmar* contained the following statement by Mordecai Bentov, a member of the wartime national government. **“The entire story of the danger of extermination was invented in every detail and exaggerated to justify the annexation of new Arab territory.”**

On 4 April 1972, the Israeli newspaper *Ma’ariv* contained the following statement by General Haim Bar-Lev, Rabin’s predecessor as chief of staff. **“We were not threatened with genocide on the eve of the Six Day War, and we had never thought of such a possibility.”**

In the same Israeli newspaper on the same day, General Ezer Weizmann, Chief of Operations during the war and a nephew of Chaim Weizmann, was quoted as saying the following. **“There was never any danger of annihilation. This hypothesis has never been considered in any serious meeting.”**

In the spring of 1972, General Matetiyahu Peled, Chief of Logistical Command during the war and one of 12 members of Israel’s General Staff, addressed a political literary club in Tel Aviv. He said: **“The thesis according to which the danger of genocide hung over us in June 1967, and according to which Israel was fighting for her very physical survival, was nothing but a bluff which was born and bred after the war.”**

And in a radio debate Peled said: **“Israel was never in real danger and there was no evidence that Egypt had any intention of attacking Israel. Israeli intelligence knew that Egypt was not prepared for war.”**

In the same programme General Chaim Herzog (a former Director of Military Intelligence, future Israeli Ambassador to the UN and President of his state) said: **“There was no danger of annihilation. Neither Israeli headquarters nor the Pentagon - as the memoirs of President Johnson proved - believed in this danger.”**

On 3 June 1972 Peled was even more explicit in an article of his own for *Le Monde*. He wrote:

“All those stories about the huge danger we were facing because of our small territorial size, an argument expounded once the war was over, have never been considered in our calculations. While we proceeded towards the full mobilisation of our forces, no person in his right mind could believe that all this force was necessary to our ‘defence’ against the Egyptian threat. This force was to crush once and for all the Egyptians at the military level and their Soviet masters at the political level. To pretend that the Egyptian forces concentrated on our borders were capable of threatening Israel’s existence does not only insult the intelligence of any person capable of analysing this kind of situation, but is primarily an insult to the Israeli army.”

The preference of some generals for truth-telling after the event provoked something of a debate in Israel, but it was short-lived. If some Israeli journalists had had their way, the generals would have kept their mouths shut. Weizmann was one of those approached with the suggestion that he and others who wanted to speak out should “not exercise their inalienable right to free speech lest they prejudice world opinion and the Jewish diaspora against Israel.”

It is not surprising that debate in Israel was shut down before it led to some serious soul-searching about the nature of the state and whether it should continue to live by the lie as well as the sword; but it is more than remarkable, I think, that nearly half a century after the events the Western media continues to prefer Zionist mythology to the reality of what happened in 1967 and why. When most reporters and commentators have need today to make reference to the Six Days War, they still tell it like the Zionists said it was in 1967 rather than how it really was. Obviously there are still limits to how far the mainstream media is prepared to go in challenging the Zionist account of history, but it could also be that lazy and ignorant journalism is a factor.

For those Western journalists and politicians who might still have doubts about who set up

and started the Six Days War, here's a quote from what Prime Minister Begin said in an unguarded, public moment in 1982. **"In June 1967 we had a choice. The Egyptian army concentrations in the Sinai approaches did not prove that Nasser was really about to attack us, We must be honest with ourselves. We decided to attack him."**

Another way of putting it and which is completely true is that what happened in June 1967 was a war of naked Israeli aggression not self-defence.

And it, the Zionist monster state, has still not been called to account for that crime.

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