

Excerpt from United Nations background document on UNEF I

(Full text: <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unef1backgr2.html>)

ESTABLISHMENT OF UNEF

Background

In October 1956, the United Nations faced a major crisis. The 1949 General Armistice Agreement between Egypt and Israel – concluded under the auspices of and supervised by the United Nations – collapsed when Israel and two major Powers occupied large portions of Egyptian territory. The Organization reacted to the crisis with speed and firmness and, to overcome it, conceived a new form of peacekeeping and set up its first peacekeeping force. This historic development was made possible mainly through the vision, resourcefulness and determination of Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld and Mr. Lester Pearson, who was at the time Secretary for External Affairs of Canada.

Since the summer of 1955, relations between Egypt and Israel had been steadily deteriorating, despite the efforts of the Chief of Staff of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) and the Secretary-General himself. Palestinian fedayeen, with the support of the Egyptian Government, had been launching frequent raids against Israel from their bases in Gaza, and these had been followed by increasingly strong reprisal attacks by Israeli armed forces. The decision taken by Egypt in the early 1950s to restrict Israeli shipping through the Suez Canal and the Strait of Tiran at the entrance to the Gulf of Aqaba, in contravention of a decision of the Security Council, remained a controversial and destabilizing issue. In the heightening tension, the control of armaments – which the Tripartite Declaration of France, the United Kingdom and the United States, of May 1950, had sought to achieve in the Middle East – had broken down, and Egypt and Israel were engaging in an intense arms race, with the East and the West supplying sophisticated weapons and equipment to the opposing sides.

On 19 July 1956, the United States Government decided to withdraw its financial aid for the Aswan Dam project on the Nile River. President Gamal Abdel Nasser announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company a week later and declared that Canal dues would be used to finance the Aswan project.

On 23 September 1956, the Governments of France and the United Kingdom requested the President of the Security Council to convene the Council to consider the “situation created by the unilateral action of the Egyptian Government in bringing to an end the system of international operation of the Suez Canal, which was confirmed and completed by the Suez Canal Convention of 1888”. On the following day, Egypt countered with a request that the Security Council consider “actions against Egypt by some Powers, particularly France and the United Kingdom, which constitute a danger to international peace and security and are serious violations of the Charter of the United Nations”.

The Security Council first met on 26 September to consider both items. At the same time, private negotiations were being carried out between the Foreign Ministers of the three countries with the good offices of the Secretary-General. By 12 October, the Secretary-General was able to work out six principles on which there seemed to be general agreement. These principles

were incorporated in a draft resolution which the Security Council unanimously adopted on the next day. This became resolution 118 (1956), by which the Security Council agreed that “any settlement of the Suez question should meet the following requirements:

- (1) There should be free and open transit through the Canal without discrimination, overt or covert – this covers both political and technical aspects;
- (2) The sovereignty of Egypt should be respected;
- (3) The operation of the Canal should be insulated from the politics of any country;
- (4) The manner of fixing tolls and charges should be decided by agreement between Egypt and the users;
- (5) A fair proportion of the dues should be allotted to development;
- (6) In case of disputes, unresolved affairs between the Suez Canal Company and the Egyptian Government should be settled by arbitration with suitable terms of reference and suitable provisions for the payment of sums found to be due.”

Following the adoption of this resolution, the Secretary-General announced that he would pursue his efforts to promote an agreement based on the principles laid down by the Security Council. However, a new situation developed in late October 1956, when Israel, in cooperation with the British and French Governments, launched an all-out attack on Egypt.

The Israeli forces crossed the border on the morning of 29 October. In the early hours of 30 October, the Chief of Staff of UNTSO, Major-General E.L.M. Burns (Canada), called for a ceasefire and requested Israel to pull its forces back to its side of the border. In the afternoon of the same day, the British and French Governments addressed a joint ultimatum to Egypt and Israel calling on both sides to cease hostilities within 12 hours and to withdraw their forces to a distance of 10 miles on each side of the Suez Canal. They also requested Egypt to allow Anglo-French forces to be stationed temporarily on the Canal at Port Said, Ismailia and Suez for the purpose of separating the belligerents and ensuring the safety of shipping. The ultimatum was accepted by Israel whose troops in any case were still far from the Suez Canal, but it was rejected by Egypt. On 31 October, France and the United Kingdom launched an air attack against targets in Egypt, which was followed shortly by a landing of their troops near Port Said at the northern end of the Canal.

General Assembly's first emergency special session

The Security Council held a meeting on 30 October at the request of the United States, which submitted a draft resolution calling upon Israel immediately to withdraw its armed forces behind the established armistice lines. It was not adopted because of British and French vetoes. A similar draft resolution sponsored by the Soviet Union was also rejected. The matter was then transferred to the General Assembly, in accordance with the procedure provided by Assembly resolution 377 (V) of 3 November 1950 entitled “Uniting for peace”. Thus, the first emergency special session of the General Assembly called under that resolution was convened on 1 November 1956.

In the early hours of the next day, the General Assembly adopted, on the proposal of the United States, resolution 997 (ES-I), calling for an immediate ceasefire, the withdrawal of all forces behind the armistice lines and the reopening of the Canal. The Secretary-General was requested to observe and report promptly on compliance to the Security Council and to the General Assembly, for such further action as those bodies might deem appropriate in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

The resolution was adopted by 64 votes to 5, with 6 abstentions. The dissenters were Australia and New Zealand, in addition to France, Israel and the United Kingdom. In explaining Canada's abstention, Lester Pearson stated that the resolution did not provide for, along with the ceasefire and a withdrawal of troops, any steps to be taken by the United Nations for a peace settlement, without which a ceasefire would be only of a temporary nature at best.

Before the session, Mr. Pearson had had extensive discussions with the Secretary-General and he felt that it might be necessary to establish some sort of United Nations police force to help resolve the crisis. Mr. Pearson submitted to the General Assembly, when it reconvened the next morning, a draft resolution on the establishment of an emergency international United Nations force.

Enabling resolutions

The Canadian proposal was adopted by the General Assembly on the same morning and became resolution 998 (ES-I) of 4 November 1956, by which the Assembly requested, "as a matter of priority, the Secretary-General to submit to it within forty-eight hours a plan for the setting up, with the consent of the nations concerned, of an emergency international United Nations Force to secure and supervise the cessation of hostilities in accordance with all the terms of the aforementioned resolution 997 (ES-I)." The voting was 57 to none, with 19 abstentions. Egypt, France, Israel, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union and Eastern European States were among the abstainers.

At the same meeting, the General Assembly also adopted resolution 999 (ES-I), by which it reaffirmed resolution 997 (ES-I) and authorized the Secretary-General immediately to arrange with the parties concerned for the implementation of the ceasefire and the halting of the movement of military forces and arms into the area.

On the same day, the Secretary-General submitted his first report on the plan for an emergency international United Nations Force, in which he recommended certain preliminary steps, including the immediate setting up of a United Nations Command. All his recommendations were endorsed by the General Assembly and included in resolution 1000 (ES-I) adopted on 5 November 1956, by which the Assembly:

Established a United Nations Command for an emergency international Force to secure and supervise the cessation of hostilities in accordance with all the terms of General Assembly resolution 997 (ES-I) of 2 November 1956;

Appointed, on an emergency basis, the Chief of Staff of UNTSO, Major-General (later Lieutenant-General) E.L.M. Burns, as Chief of the Command;

Authorized the Chief of the Command immediately to recruit, from the observer corps of UNTSO, a limited number of officers who were to be nationals of countries other than those having permanent membership in the Security Council, and further authorized him, in consultation with the Secretary-General, to undertake the recruitment directly, from various Member States other than the permanent members of the Security Council, of the additional number of officers needed;

Invited the Secretary-General to take such administrative measures as might be necessary for prompt execution of the actions envisaged.

The resolution was adopted by 57 votes to none, with 19 abstentions. As with resolution 998 (ES-I), Egypt, France, Israel, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union and Eastern European States abstained.

Concept and guiding principles

On 6 November, the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly his second and final report on the plan for an emergency United Nations Force. In this report, he defined the concept of the new Force and certain guiding principles for its organization and functioning. The main points of the report:

(a) At the outset, an emergency international United Nations Force could be developed on the basis of three concepts. In the first place, it could be set up on the basis of principles reflected in the constitution of the United Nations itself. This would mean that its chief responsible officer should be appointed by the United Nations itself and in his functions should be responsible ultimately to the General Assembly and/or the Security Council. His authority should be so defined as to make him fully independent of the policies of any one nation and his relations to the Secretary-General should correspond to those of the Chief of Staff of UNTSO. A second possibility would be for the United Nations to charge a country, or a group of countries, with the responsibility to provide independently for an international Force serving for the purposes determined by the United Nations. In this approach, which was followed in the case of the Unified Command in Korea, it would obviously be impossible to achieve the same independence in relation to national policies as would be established through the first concept. Finally, as a third possibility, an international Force might be set up in agreement among a group of nations, later to be brought into an appropriate relationship to the United Nations. This approach was open to the same reservation as the second concept and possibly others. The Secretary-General noted that in deciding on 5 November 1956 to establish a United Nations Command, on an emergency basis, the General Assembly had chosen the first type of international force.

(b) The Secretary-General set out certain guiding principles for the organization and functioning of the Force:

The decision taken by the General Assembly on the United Nations Command recognized the independence of the Chief of Command and established the principle that the Force should be recruited from Member States other than the permanent members of the Security Council. In this context, the Secretary-General observed that the question of the composition of the staff and contingents should not be subject to agreement by the parties involved since such a requirement would be difficult to reconcile with the development of the international Force along the course already being followed by the General Assembly.

The terms of reference of the Force were to secure and supervise the cessation of hostilities in accordance with all the terms of the General Assembly's resolution 997 (ES-I) of 2 November 1956. It followed from its terms of reference that there was no intent in the establishment of the Force to influence the military balance in the current conflict, and thereby the political balance affecting efforts to settle the conflict. The Force should be of a temporary nature, the length of its assignment being determined by the needs arising out of the current conflict.

(c) Guidelines on the functions to be performed were outlined as follows:

The General Assembly's resolution of 2 November 1956 urged that "all parties now involved in hostilities in the area agree to an immediate ceasefire and, as part thereof, halt the movement of military forces and arms into the area", and further urged the parties to the Armistice Agreements promptly to withdraw all forces behind the armistice lines, to desist from raids against those lines into neighbouring territories and to observe scrupulously the provisions of the Agreements. These two provisions combined indicated that the functions of the United Nations Force would be, when a ceasefire was established, to enter Egyptian territory with the consent of the Egyptian Government, in order to help maintain quiet during and after the withdrawal of non-Egyptian forces and to secure compliance with the other terms established in the resolution.

The Force obviously should have no rights other than those necessary for the execution of its functions, in cooperation with local authorities. It would be more than an observer corps, but in no way a military force temporarily controlling the territory in which it was stationed; nor should the Force have functions exceeding those necessary to secure peaceful conditions, on the assumption that the parties to the conflict would take all necessary steps for compliance with the recommendations of the General Assembly. Its functions could, on this basis, be assumed to cover an area extending roughly from the Suez Canal to the Armistice Demarcation Lines established in the Armistice Agreement between Egypt and Israel....

Advisory Committee

After considering the report of the Secretary-General, the General Assembly adopted, on 7 November, resolution 1001 (ES-I) approving the guiding principles for the organization and functioning of the emergency international United Nations Force as expounded in the Secretary-General's report; concurring in the definition of the functions of the Force in the report; and approving provisionally the basic rule concerning the financing of the Force laid down in that report. The Assembly established an Advisory Committee composed of Brazil, Canada, Ceylon, Colombia, India, Norway and Pakistan. It requested the Committee, whose Chairman was the Secretary-General, to undertake the development of those aspects of the planning for the Force and its operation not already dealt with by the General Assembly and which did not fall within the area of the direct responsibility of the Chief of Command. It authorized the Secretary-General to issue all regulations and instructions essential to the effective functioning of the Force, following consultation with the Committee, and to take all other necessary administrative and executive action. The Committee was to continue to assist the Secretary-General in his responsibilities, and it could request the convening of the General Assembly if necessary. Finally, the Assembly requested all Member States to afford assistance as necessary to the United Nations Command in the performance of its functions, including arrangements for passage to and from the area involved.

This resolution, which, with resolution 998 (ES-I) of 4 November, formed the basis for the establishment of the United Nations Emergency Force, was adopted by 64 votes to none, with 12 abstentions. France and the United Kingdom voted this time with the majority. Egypt and Israel remained with the abstainers, together with South Africa and the Soviet Union and Eastern European States. The representatives of France and the United Kingdom indicated that the resolution was acceptable to their Governments because it provided, as they had urged, for an effective international Force in the area. In explaining his abstention, the representative of the Soviet Union stated that the establishment of the Force under General Assembly resolution

1000 (ES-I) and the plan for its implementation in resolution 1001 (ES-I) were contrary to the Charter, and that the only reason for abstaining rather than voting against the proposal lay in the hope of preventing any further extension of the aggression against Egypt.

Further General Assembly resolutions

On the same day, 7 November, the General Assembly also adopted resolution 1002 (ES-I), by which it called once again upon Israel immediately to withdraw all its forces behind the armistice lines, and upon France and the United Kingdom immediately to withdraw all their forces from Egyptian territory....

During the first emergency special session, the General Assembly had adopted a total of seven resolutions. By these resolutions, the Assembly gave the Secretary-General the authority and support he required to bring about the cessation of hostilities in Egypt and the withdrawal of foreign troops from Egyptian territory with the assistance of a new type of peacekeeping machinery, the United Nations peacekeeping force. The idea of such a force, which was to have such an impact on the work of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security, came initially from Mr. Lester Pearson. Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld made it a practical reality.

INITIAL STAGES OF UNEF

The United Nations Emergency Force was the key element in the United Nations efforts to resolve the crisis arising from the military action of the Israeli and Anglo-French forces against Egypt. It was a pre-condition for securing the ceasefire and a pre-condition for bringing about the withdrawal of the invading forces. Therefore, a priority objective of the Secretary-General, after the adoption of the enabling resolutions, was to assemble a usable Force and land it in Egypt as rapidly as possible.

The establishment of this first peacekeeping Force in United Nations history was a task of great complexity. The concept had no real precedent. The nearest parallel was UNTSO, which also had peacekeeping functions but was a much simpler operation and did not provide much help as regards the many organizational and operational problems involved.

Immediately after the Assembly authorized the Force, the Chief of Command, General Burns, who was in Jerusalem at the time, selected a group of UNTSO observers who began planning the organization of the new Force. The Secretary-General approached the Governments of the potential participating countries to obtain the required military personnel. He also initiated negotiations with the Egyptian Government to secure its agreement as the host country for the entry and stationing of the Force in Egypt.

Negotiations with the Egyptian Government

A key principle governing the stationing and functioning of UNEF, and later of all other peacekeeping forces, was the consent of the host Government. Since it was not an enforcement action under Chapter VII of the Charter, UNEF could enter and operate in Egypt only with the consent of the Egyptian Government. This principle was clearly stated by the General Assembly in adopting resolution 1001 (ES-I) of 7 November 1956 concerning the establishment of UNEF.

Immediately after the adoption of that resolution, the Secretary-General instructed General Burns to approach the Egyptian authorities in Cairo in order to prepare the ground for the prompt implementation of the resolution. The Government of Egypt had already accepted the terms of resolution 1000 (ES-I) on the establishment of a United Nations Command, and this was considered by the Secretary-General as an acceptance in principle of the Force itself.

However, before consenting to the arrival of the Force on its territory, Egypt wished to have certain points in the Assembly resolution clarified. In particular, it wanted to know in clearer terms the functions of the Force, especially in regard to whether, when the Force reached the Armistice Demarcation Line, the Governments concerned would agree to the areas to be occupied by it, how long the Force would stay, whether it was supposed to have functions in the Suez Canal area apart from observing the withdrawal of the Anglo-French forces and whether it would stay in the Canal area after the Anglo-French withdrawal.

Firm assurance was given to the Egyptian authorities that cooperation with the United Nations would not infringe Egyptian sovereignty, detract from Egypt's power freely to negotiate a settlement on the Suez Canal or submit Egypt to any control from the outside. The Secretary-General impressed upon those authorities that the Force provided a guarantee for the withdrawal of foreign forces from Egypt and that, since it would come only with Egypt's consent, it could not stay or operate in Egypt if that consent were withdrawn.

On the basis of the General Assembly's resolutions as interpreted by the Secretary-General, the Government of Egypt gave its consent on 14 November to the arrival of UNEF in Egypt, and the first transport of UNEF troops took place on the next day.

While the exchange of views that had taken place was considered sufficient as a basis for the sending of the first units of UNEF to Egypt, the Secretary-General felt that a firmer foundation had to be laid for the presence and functioning of the Force in Egypt and for the continued cooperation with the Egyptian authorities. He also considered it essential to discuss personally with the Egyptian authorities, at the highest level, various questions which flowed from the decision to send the Force to Egypt, including the selection of national contingents.

The Secretary-General therefore visited Cairo from 16 to 18 November. During this visit, he reached agreement with the Egyptian Government on the composition of the Force. President Nasser had first opposed the inclusion of the Canadian, Danish and Norwegian units because they belonged to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and because, in his view, Canada and the United Kingdom were too congeneric. But on the insistence of the Secretary-General, this opposition was withdrawn. The basic discussions centred on the stationing and functioning of the Force.

The good faith agreement

On this essential matter, a "good faith agreement" was worked out and included in an aide-memoire which served as the basis for the stationing of UNEF in Egypt. It noted that the Assembly, by resolution 1001 (ES-I), had approved the principle that the Force could not be requested "to be stationed or operate on the territory of a given country without the consent of the Government of that country". It then went on to say:

The Government of Egypt and the Secretary-General of the United Nations have stated their understanding on the basic points for the presence and functioning of UNEF as follows:

1. The Government of Egypt declares that, when exercising its sovereign rights on any matter concerning the presence and functioning of UNEF, it will be guided, in good faith, by its acceptance of General Assembly resolution 1000 (ES-I) of 5 November 1956.
2. The United Nations takes note of this declaration of the Government of Egypt and declares that the activities of UNEF will be guided, in good faith, by the task established for the Force in the aforementioned resolutions; in particular, the United Nations, understanding this to correspond to the wishes of the Government of Egypt, reaffirms its willingness to maintain UNEF until its task is completed.
3. The Government of Egypt and the Secretary-General declare that it is their intention to proceed forthwith, in the light of points 1 and 2 above, to explore jointly concrete aspects of the functioning of UNEF, including its stationing and the question of its lines of communication and supply; the Government of Egypt, confirming its intention to facilitate the functioning of UNEF, and the United Nations are agreed to expedite in cooperation the implementation of guiding principles arrived at as a result of that joint exploration on the basis of the resolutions of the General Assembly....

Status of the Force agreement

In addition to the good faith agreement, two other memoranda were agreed upon between the Secretary-General and President Nasser. One of them set out the understanding that the area to be occupied by UNEF after the Israeli withdrawal would be subject to agreement and that the Force would have no function in the Port Said and the Suez Canal areas after the withdrawal of the Anglo-French troops. UNEF could not stay or operate in Egypt unless Egypt continued its consent. The other memorandum specifically separated the question of the reopening of the Suez Canal from the functions of UNEF. The Secretary-General brought these memoranda to the attention of the Advisory Committee.

With these agreements, UNEF was set up. Subsequent discussions were continued between the Secretariat and the Egyptian authorities to work out more detailed and comprehensive arrangements on the status of the Force in Egypt. These arrangements were set out in a letter dated 8 February 1957 from the Secretary-General to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt and were accepted by the latter in his reply of the same date to the Secretary-General. This exchange of letters constituted the agreement on the status of the United Nations Emergency Force in Egypt which the General Assembly noted with approval in its resolution 1126 (XI) of 22 February 1957.

The status of the Force agreement covered a wide range of problems, including the premises of the Force and the use of the United Nations flag, freedom of movement, privileges and immunities of the Force, civil and criminal jurisdiction and settlement of disputes or claims. Two of the key provisions concerned freedom of movement and criminal jurisdiction. Members of the Force were to enjoy full freedom of movement in the performance of their duties. They were to be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of their respective national Governments in respect of any criminal offences which they might commit in Egypt.

Negotiations with the participating countries

The principles of consent applied not only to the host Government but also to the participating countries. In accordance with the principles approved by the General Assembly, the Force was

to be composed of national contingents accepted for service by the Secretary-General from among those voluntarily offered by Member States. Troops from the permanent members of the Security Council or from any country which, for geographical and other reasons, might have a special interest in the conflict would be excluded. In selecting the contingents, the Secretary-General had to take due account of the views of the host Government and such other factors as their suitability in terms of the needs of the Force, their size and availability, the extent to which they would be self-contained, the undesirability of too great a variation in ordnance and basic equipment, the problem of transportation and the goal of balanced composition.

The size of the Force was to be determined by the Commander in consultation with the Secretary-General and in the light of the functions to be performed. The original estimate by the Force Commander of the manpower needs to perform those tasks was the equivalent of two combat brigades, or about 6,000 men. It was decided that the national contingents should be sufficiently large to be relatively self-contained and that the Force should have adequate support units, including a light air-unit. From the point of view of balance, it was desirable that the differences in the size of the units should not be so great as to lead to excessive dependence on any one State.

The Secretary-General sought certain assurances from the participating countries. He pointed out that the effective functioning of UNEF required that some continuity of service of the participating units should be assured in order to enable the Force Commander to plan his operations. He also insisted that the Commander of each national contingent should take orders exclusively from the Force Commander and should be in a position to exercise the necessary disciplinary authority with the members of his contingent.

The arrangements between the United Nations and the contributing countries were expanded and set out in formal agreements in the form of an exchange of letters between the Secretary-General and the respective participating Governments.

By 5 November 1956, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Pakistan and Sweden had replied affirmatively. In the following days, Afghanistan, Brazil, Burma, Ceylon, Chile, Czechoslovakia, Ecuador, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Laos, New Zealand, Peru, the Philippines, Romania and Yugoslavia also offered to provide contingents. In addition, the United States Government informed the Secretary-General that it was prepared to help as regards airlifts, shipping, transport and supplies. Italy agreed to place at the disposal of the United Nations the facilities of Capodichino Airport at Naples for the assembly and transit of UNEF personnel and equipment and to help in the airlift of personnel and equipment from Italy to Egypt. The Swiss Government, a non-member State, offered to defray part of the cost of Swissair charter planes.

UNEF's composition

In consultation with the Force Commander and after discussions with the Government of Egypt, the Secretary-General accepted contingents from 10 countries: Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Finland, India, Indonesia, Norway, Sweden and Yugoslavia. The offers of assistance from the United States, Italy and Switzerland were also accepted. With the agreement of Egypt, an air base at Abu Suweir near Ismailia was used as the central depot for the early contingents.

The extent of the area to be covered by UNEF called for highly mobile reconnaissance. This need was met by Yugoslavia, which provided a complete reconnaissance battalion. Canada

later supplied a fully equipped, light-armoured squadron. Supporting units were obtained and assigned with the same urgency as those engaged in patrolling. The Indian contingent was given responsibility for the supply depot and the service institute; Canada and India provided units for transport, the Provost Marshal and signals; Norway and Canada covered the medical needs. The Canadian contingent was also made responsible for the ordnance depot and workshop, the base post office, engineering, the dental unit, movement control and air support.

General Burns and his group of UNTSO military observers arrived in Cairo on 12 November 1956 and set up a temporary headquarters there. The first UNEF units, composed of Colombians, Danes and Norwegians, flew to Egypt on 15 and 16 November. They were followed by other contingents. The target strength of about 6,000 men was reached in February 1957 after the Brazilian battalion had arrived at Port Said by sea. With the appointment of staff officers selected from the participating countries, the UNTSO military observers returned to their normal duties in Jerusalem.

The Governments of Indonesia and Finland, which had agreed to participate in the Force only for a limited period, withdrew their contingents in September and December 1957, respectively. The Colombian Government withdrew its contingent in December 1958. The other contingents continued to serve with UNEF until the withdrawal of the Force in 1967. The deployment and assignment of the contingents were changed from time to time according to the requirements of the operation.

The strength of the Force remained at the authorized level of about 6,000 until the end of 1957. In the following years, it was gradually reduced because the situation in the area of operation remained quiet and also because of financial difficulties. There were 5,341 all ranks with the Force in 1960, 5,102 in 1963, 4,581 in 1965 and 3,959 in 1966. In November 1965, a survey team was sent to the area to examine the possibility of further reductions. In accordance with its recommendations, the strength was further brought down to 3,378 at the time the Force began its withdrawal in May 1967.

UNEF's organization

The United Nations Emergency Force, established by the General Assembly, was a subsidiary organ of the Assembly under Article 22 of the Charter. It was directed by the Secretary-General under the general authority of the General Assembly.

The Secretary-General was authorized to issue all regulations and instructions which might be essential to the effective functioning of the Force and to take all other necessary administrative and executive actions. To assist him in these matters, he set up an informal military group at Headquarters composed of military representatives of participating countries and headed by his military adviser – Major-General I.A.E. Martola (Finland), during the formative period. The Secretary-General was also assisted by the Advisory Committee established under Assembly resolution 1001 (ES-I).

The command of the Force was assumed in the field by the Force Commander (originally designated as the Chief of Command), who was appointed by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Secretary-General. The Commander was operationally responsible for the performance of all functions assigned to the Force by the United Nations and for the deployment and assignment of the troops placed at the disposal of the Force. He had direct authority for the operation of the Force and also was responsible for the provision of facilities,

supplies and auxiliary services. He reported to the Secretary-General and was responsible to him.

The national contingents were under the command of the contingent commanders, who were appointed by their respective Governments. These contingents remained part of their respective national armed forces but, during their assignment to UNEF, they owed international allegiance and were placed under the operational control of the United Nations. This control was exercised through the contingent commanders, who received their instructions from the Force Commander.

The officers and soldiers of each contingent continued to wear their national uniforms but with United Nations insignia. The blue beret and helmet were created by Secretary-General Hammarskjöld during the formative days of UNEF....

CEASEFIRE AND WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN FORCES

Establishment of the ceasefire

The first objective of Secretary-General Hammarskjöld was to secure a ceasefire in accordance with the call of the General Assembly contained in resolution 997 (ES-I) of 2 November 1956. During the meeting at which this resolution was adopted, the representative of Israel stated that his Government agreed to an immediate ceasefire, provided that a similar answer was forthcoming from Egypt. On the same day, the Egyptian Government informed the Secretary-General that it would accept the call for a ceasefire on the condition that military actions against Egypt were stopped. The Secretary-General immediately notified Israel, France and the United Kingdom of Egypt's position and called upon all four parties to bring hostilities to an end.

On 4 November, the Secretary-General requested all four parties concerned to bring to a halt all hostile military action by 2400 hours GMT on the same day. In identical messages addressed to the Governments of France and the United Kingdom, he pointed out that in the light of the replies received from Egypt and Israel, it was obvious that the positions of France and the United Kingdom would determine whether or not it would be possible to achieve a ceasefire between Egypt and Israel. He urged the two Governments to give him a definitive acceptance on his ceasefire call at the earliest possible moment. On 5 November, France and the United Kingdom informed the Secretary-General that as soon as the Governments of Egypt and Israel signified acceptance of, and the United Nations endorsed a plan for, an international Force with the prescribed functions, they would cease all military action.

Later in the day, the British representative announced that a ceasefire had been ordered at Port Said. Orders had also been given to cease all bombing forthwith throughout Egypt, and other forms of air action would be limited to the support of any necessary operation in the Canal area. Also on the same day, Egypt accepted the Secretary-General's request for a ceasefire without any attached conditions and Israel informed the Secretary-General that in the light of Egypt's declaration, it confirmed its readiness to agree to a ceasefire.

In an aide-mémoire dated 5 November, the Secretary-General informed France and the United Kingdom that, since on that date the General Assembly had taken a decisive step towards setting up the international Force by establishing a United Nations Command, and since Egypt and Israel had agreed, without conditions, to a ceasefire, the conditions for a general ceasefire would seem to be established.

In their replies of 6 November, the two Governments announced that their forces were being ordered to cease fire at midnight GMT on the same day, pending confirmation that Egypt and Israel had accepted an unconditional ceasefire and that there would be a United Nations Force competent to secure and supervise the attainment of the objectives of resolution 997 (ES-I). The Secretary-General promptly informed Egypt and Israel that the ceasefire would become effective at midnight. He noted that the Assembly had not made the ceasefire dependent on the creation or the functioning of UNEF, since its call for a ceasefire and its decision to establish the Force were in separate resolutions.

The ceasefire was established at midnight GMT on 7/8 November and, except for isolated incidents, generally held.

Withdrawal of the Anglo-French force

At the same time as the Secretary-General was taking urgent steps to set up the new Force, he was pressing France and the United Kingdom for an early withdrawal of their forces from the Port Said area.

The two Governments told him that their troops would be withdrawn as soon as the proposed United Nations Force was in a position to assume effectively the tasks assigned to it and, in particular, to ensure that hostilities would not be resumed in the area.

The Secretary-General therefore endeavoured to move the first units of UNEF to Egypt and build up its strength as rapidly as he could. But the establishment of this first United Nations peacekeeping force was not an easy job, and it took time to obtain the required units from the various contributing countries, transport them to the area of operations and make them fully operational. The first units from the Colombian, Danish and Norwegian contingents arrived in the area on 15 and 16 November and were immediately deployed in the Suez Canal area.

On 24 November, the General Assembly adopted resolution 1120 (XI), by which it noted with regret that two thirds of the French forces and all of the British forces remained in Egypt, and it reiterated its call to the British and French Governments for the immediate withdrawal of their forces.

In messages dated 3 December, the British and French Governments noted that an effective United Nations Force was currently arriving in Egypt, that the Secretary-General had accepted the responsibility for organizing the task of clearing the Suez Canal as expeditiously as possible, that free and secure transit would be re-established through the Canal when it was cleared and that the Secretary-General would promote as quickly as possible negotiations with regard to the future regime of the Canal on the basis of the six requirements set out in the Security Council's resolution 118 (1956) of 13 October 1956. The two Governments confirmed their decision to continue the withdrawal of their forces from the Port Said area without delay.

The Secretary-General immediately instructed General Burns to get in touch with the Anglo-French Commander and work out with him arrangements for the complete withdrawal of the Anglo-French forces without delay, ensuring that UNEF would be in a position to assume its responsibilities in the Port Said area by the middle of December. On 22 December, the withdrawal of the Anglo-French forces was completed and UNEF took over the Port Said area.

Initial withdrawal of the Israeli forces: November 1956—mid-January 1957

The negotiations undertaken by the Secretary-General to achieve the withdrawal of the Anglo-French forces required nearly two months; those regarding the withdrawal of Israeli forces took much longer. By resolution 997 (ES-I) of 2 November 1956, the General Assembly had urged the parties to the Armistice Agreements promptly to withdraw all forces behind the armistice lines, to desist from raids across those lines into neighbouring territory and to observe scrupulously the Armistice Agreements. In resolution 1002 (ES-I) of 7 November, the Assembly, after noting its decision to establish a United Nations Command for an international force, called once again upon Israel immediately to withdraw its forces behind the armistice lines.

On 7 November, the Prime Minister of Israel, Mr. David Ben Gurion, in a statement to the Israeli Knesset (Parliament), stated that the armistice lines between Egypt and Israel had no validity and that "on no account will Israel agree to the stationing of a foreign force, no matter how called, in her territory, or in any of the areas occupied by her". On hearing of this statement, the Secretary-General immediately wrote to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel, Mrs. Golda Meir, to inform her that this position was in violation of the resolutions of the General Assembly and, if maintained, would seriously complicate the task of giving effect to those resolutions.

On 21 November, in reply to queries by the Secretary-General, the Government of Israel stated that there had already been a withdrawal of its forces for varying distances along the entire Egyptian frontier. It reiterated its position regarding the withdrawal of the Israeli forces and indicated that the satisfactory arrangements it sought were such as would ensure Israel's security against the recurrence of the threat or danger of attack and against acts of belligerency by land or sea. Noting that it had not yet had an opportunity to discuss the question of satisfactory arrangements to be made with the United Nations in connection with UNEF, it stated that it was awaiting information on the proposed size, location and stationing arrangements of the Force and on the methods proposed for the discharge of its functions as laid down in the General Assembly's resolutions of 2, 5 and 7 November. It was also awaiting a clarification by Egypt on its policy and intention with respect to belligerency or peace with Israel which must influence Israel's dispositions on matters affecting its security....

General Burns met with General Moshe Dayan, the Israeli Commander, on the morning of 16 December. They agreed on specific arrangements for a first phase of withdrawal, and UNEF troops moved forward to within five kilometres of new Israeli positions. Regarding further withdrawals, General Dayan informed the UNEF Commander that, according to his instructions, the Israeli forces were to withdraw from the remainder of the Sinai at an approximate rate of 25 kilometres each week during the next four weeks. This plan was considered by General Burns to be inadequate. Consequently, at his request, a new withdrawal proposal was submitted by the Israeli Government on 21 December. The new proposal envisaged that the remaining Israeli withdrawal would take place in two phases. The second phase would involve a full Israeli withdrawal behind the armistice lines at an unstated date.

In accordance with this proposal, a further withdrawal of Israeli forces took place on 7 and 8 January 1957 to a north-south line roughly following meridian 33 degrees, 44 minutes, leaving no Israeli forces west of El Arish. On 15 January, the Israeli forces withdrew eastward another 25 to 30 kilometres, except in the area of Sharm el Sheikh. This phase involved the entry into El Arish and St. Catherine's Monastery of the United Nations Emergency Force, which had closely followed the withdrawing Israeli troops....

Second withdrawal of Israeli forces: February 1957

On 2 February 1957, the General Assembly, after receiving the Secretary-General's report, adopted two resolutions. By resolution 1124 (XI), it deplored the failure of Israel to complete its withdrawal behind the Armistice Demarcation Line and called upon it to do so without delay. By resolution 1125 (XI), the Assembly, recognizing that withdrawal by Israel must be followed by action which would assure progress towards the creation of peaceful conditions, called upon Egypt and Israel scrupulously to observe the provisions of the 1949 General Armistice Agreement and considered that "after full withdrawal of Israel from the Sharm el Sheikh and the Gaza areas, the scrupulous maintenance of the Armistice Agreement requires the placing of the United Nations Emergency Force on the Egyptian-Israeli Armistice Demarcation Line and the implementation of other measures as proposed in the Secretary-General's report, with due regard to the considerations set out therein with a view to assist in achieving situations conducive to the maintenance of peaceful conditions in the area". The General Assembly further requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with the parties concerned, to take steps to carry out these measures and to report to it as appropriate.

On 4 February, the Secretary-General met with the representative of Israel to discuss implementation of the Assembly's resolutions. Israel presented to him an aide-memoire in which it raised two points. First, it requested the Secretary-General to ask the Government of Egypt whether Egypt agreed "to the mutual and full abstention from belligerent acts, by land, air and sea, on withdrawal of Israeli troops". Secondly, Israel sought clarification as to whether "immediately on the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Sharm el Sheikh area, units of the United Nations Emergency Force will be stationed along the western shore of the Gulf of Aqaba in order to act as a restraint against hostile acts, and will remain so deployed until another effective means is agreed upon between the parties concerned for ensuring permanent freedom of navigation and the absence of belligerent acts in the Strait of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba"....

On 1 March, the Foreign Minister of Israel announced in the General Assembly the decision of her Government to act in compliance with the request contained in Assembly resolution 1124 (XI) to withdraw behind the Armistice Demarcation Line... By 0400 hours GMT, all Israelis had withdrawn from the Strip with the exception of an Israeli troop unit at Rafah Camp. By agreement, that last Israeli element was to be withdrawn at 1600 hours GMT on 8 March and full withdrawal from the Sharm el Sheikh area would be effected at the same time. These withdrawals took place as agreed and thus the Secretary-General was able to report to the General Assembly on 8 March 1957 full compliance with its resolution 1124 (XI) of 2 February 1957.

UNEF DEPLOYMENT

...When UNEF became operational in mid-November 1956, the ceasefire had been achieved and was generally holding. The Anglo-French forces were occupying the Port Said area including Port Fuad in the northern end of the Suez Canal. The Israeli forces were deployed east of the Canal about 10 kilometres from it. The Secretary-General was actively negotiating with the three Governments concerned and pressing for the early withdrawal of their forces from Egyptian soil.

The objectives of UNEF were to supervise the cessation of hostilities and to assist in the withdrawal process once agreement was reached on this matter. Shortly after its arrival in Egypt, UNEF was interposed between the Anglo-French and the Egyptian forces, occupying a

buffer zone. All incidents involving the ceasefire were reported to the proper authorities, who were urged to prevent recurrences. No provisions had been made for the establishment of joint machinery whereby incidents could be examined and discussed. UNEF's role was limited to investigating, reporting and, if warranted, protesting to the relevant authorities.

By arrangements with the Anglo-French forces, units of UNEF entered Port Said and Port Fuad and took responsibility for maintaining law and order in certain areas, in cooperation with the local authorities. The Force also undertook guard duty of some vulnerable installations and other points.

In the period of transition, when the Anglo-French forces were preparing to leave and during the withdrawal process, UNEF undertook certain essential administrative functions such as security and the protection of public and private property, with the cooperation of the Governor and the Police Inspector in Port Said. With the sanction of the local authorities, UNEF personnel also performed administrative functions with respect to public services, utilities and arrangements for the provisioning of the local population with foodstuffs, and exercised limited powers of detention. All administrative and policing responsibilities were turned over to the Egyptian authorities the day following the Anglo-French evacuation.

Other tasks of the Force included clearing minefields in the Suez Canal area and arranging for exchanges of prisoners and detainees between the Egyptian Government and the Anglo-French command. In the last stage of the withdrawal of the Anglo-French troops from Port Said and Port Fuad, UNEF units were stationed around the final perimeter of the zone occupied by the withdrawing forces, thus preventing clashes between them and the Egyptian troops.

Second phase: Sinai peninsula (December 1956–March 1957)

After the withdrawal of the Anglo-French forces, UNEF concentrated its efforts on maintaining the ceasefire between the Egyptian and Israeli forces and on arranging for Israeli withdrawal from Egyptian territory. The Israeli forces withdrew from the Sinai peninsula, with the exception of the Gaza and the Sharm el Sheikh areas, in three stages: on 3 December 1956, on 7 and 8 January 1957 and from 15 to 22 January 1957.

On the whole, the functions performed by UNEF in the Sinai were similar to those undertaken in the Canal area. The Force was interposed between the Egyptian and Israeli forces in a temporary buffer zone from 3 December onwards, moving eastbound as the Israeli forces withdrew, and in accordance with pre-arranged procedures.

During the successive stages of the Israeli withdrawal, UNEF temporarily undertook some local civic responsibilities, including security functions in a few inhabited areas, handing over such responsibilities to the Egyptian civilian authorities as soon as they returned to their posts. The Force also arranged and carried out exchanges of prisoners of war between Egypt and Israel and discharged certain investigatory functions. It cleared minefields in the Sinai and repaired portions of damaged roads and tracks crossing the peninsula.

Third phase: Gaza Strip and Sharm el Sheikh (March 1957)

After 22 January 1957, Israel held on to the last two areas it still occupied. The persistent negotiations to ensure withdrawal are described above. The withdrawal from the Gaza Strip took place on 6 and 7 March 1957 and that from the Sharm el Sheikh area from 8 to 12 March.

In accordance with the arrangements agreed to by the Egyptian Government, a UNEF detachment was stationed in Sharm el Sheikh following the withdrawal of the Israeli forces. This detachment maintained an observation post and kept the Strait of Tiran under constant watch.

In the Gaza Strip, two local conditions were of special concern to UNEF as it moved into the area. It was across the Armistice Demarcation Line along the Strip that the greatest number of infiltrations and raids had occurred during past years and there were in the area a large number of Palestinian Arab refugees, who were being assisted by UNRWA.

UNEF units entered the Gaza Strip on 6 March as the withdrawal of Israeli forces began. As a first step, arrangements were made between the Force Commander and the Israeli authorities for the United Nations to assume its responsibilities in the Strip as the Israeli troops and civil administrators withdrew.

On 7 March, General Burns notified the population of Gaza that UNEF, acting in fulfilment of its functions as determined by the General Assembly and with the consent of the Government of Egypt, was being deployed in the area for the purpose of maintaining quiet during and after the withdrawal of the Israeli forces. He also announced that until further arrangements were made, UNEF had assumed responsibility for civil affairs in the area and that UNRWA would continue to provide food and other services as in the past.

The involvement of UNEF in civil administration was of a purely temporary nature, pending the re-establishment of local civilian authority. In this connection, UNEF cooperated closely with UNRWA in meeting the needs of the local population. The operation of the Force during this initial period was greatly facilitated by the presence in Gaza of an important branch of UNRWA and by the fact that the Egypt-Israel Mixed Armistice Commission had its headquarters in Gaza and made available to the Force its personnel and its communications facilities.

Final phase: deployment along the borders (March 1957–May 1967)

After the completion of the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Egyptian territory, the main objective of UNEF was to supervise the cessation of hostilities between Egypt and Israel. Its basic functions were to act as an informal buffer between the Egyptian and Israeli forces along the Armistice Demarcation Line (ADL) and the international frontier in order to avoid incidents, prevent illegal crossings of the Line by civilians of either side for whatever purposes, and to observe and report on all violations of the Line whether on land, sea or in the air.

To perform these functions, UNEF troops were deployed on the western side of the ADL and the international frontier, covering a distance of 273 kilometres. The Sinai coast from the northern end of the Gulf of Aqaba to the Strait of Tiran, a further distance of 187 kilometres, was kept under observation by UNEF air reconnaissance. As indicated earlier, a UNEF detachment was stationed at Sharm el Sheikh near the Strait of Tiran.

By day, the entire length of the ADL (about 59 kilometres) was kept under observation by some 72 intervisible observation posts. Each post was manned during daylight hours; by night, the sentries were withdrawn and replaced by patrols of five to seven men each. The patrols moved on foot, covering the length of the ADL on an average of three rounds each night and giving particular attention to roads likely to be used by infiltrators. Platoon camps were set up to the rear of the posts, each holding a reserve detachment available to go to the aid of an observation

post or patrol should the need arise. Telephone communications by day and a system of flare signals, supplemented by wireless, at night ensured a speedy response to calls for help.

Along the international frontier, rough terrain and scattered minefields restricted the access roads for potential infiltrators, who tended to confine their activities to certain areas. These sensitive areas were covered by a system of patrols. Eight outposts were established along the frontier. Motor patrols from these outposts covered the areas between the outposts and certain tracks. In addition to ground observers, the entire length of the international frontier was also patrolled by air reconnaissance planes on a daily basis, later reduced to three times a week. Any suspicious activity seen from the air could be checked by ground patrols dispatched from the outposts.

To prevent infiltration and incidents, UNEF secured the cooperation of the Egyptian authorities. The inhabitants of Gaza were officially informed that the Government of Egypt, as a matter of policy, was opposed to infiltration across the Armistice Demarcation Line. They were notified that they were forbidden to approach the ADL within 50 to 100 metres by day and 500 metres by night. The police in Gaza were instructed to take effective measures to find persons responsible for laying mines and for other incidents and to prevent recurrences. The local Palestinian police also cooperated with UNEF in preventing infiltrations. UNEF was authorized to apprehend infiltrators and persons approaching the ADL in suspicious circumstances. In practice, this applied to a zone extending up to 500 metres from the line. The persons so apprehended were interrogated by UNEF and then were handed over to the local police.

In the performance of their duties, UNEF soldiers were not authorized to use force except in self-defence. They were never to take the initiative in the use of force, but could respond with fire to an armed attack upon them, even though this might result from a refusal on their part to obey an order from the attacking party not to resist. UNEF maintained close liaison with the two parties, particularly with the Egyptian authorities as representatives of the host Government.

UNEF enjoyed full freedom of movement in the Gaza Strip and between the Sinai posts, UNEF headquarters and the units deployed along the Armistice Demarcation Line. This included freedom of flight over the Sinai peninsula and the Gaza Strip for UNEF aircraft, as well as the manning of the Gaza airport by UNEF.

The deployment of UNEF along the ADL raised a question of the respective responsibilities of the Force and UNTSO. As indicated earlier, Israel denounced the General Armistice Agreement with Egypt in early November 1956, but the United Nations did not accept this unilateral action. Therefore, the Chairman of the Egypt-Israel Mixed Armistice Commission and the UNTSO military observers had remained at their posts throughout the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip and afterwards. Upon the withdrawal of the Israeli forces, the Secretary-General, as a practical arrangement and without any change in the legal status of the Mixed Armistice Commission, placed the UNTSO personnel assigned to EIMAC under the operational control of the Commander of UNEF. In view of its position with respect to the General Armistice Agreement, the Government of Israel lodged its complaints of violations of the ADL only with UNEF, but the Force maintained that official investigations of incidents should be carried out through the Armistice Commission. In practice, problems arising between Israel and the United Nations relating to matters covered by the General Armistice Agreement were resolved in a practical way, with UNEF taking over some of the duties previously performed by UNTSO.

The activities carried out by UNEF following its deployment along the Armistice Demarcation Line and the international frontier, and the methods followed in this connection, remained virtually unchanged until the withdrawal of the Force in May 1967. Its area of operations, which had been one of the most disturbed areas in the Middle East, became remarkably quiet. Incidents, such as crossings of the ADL/international frontier, firing across the Line and air violations, naturally continued to occur, but they were relatively infrequent and generally of a minor nature. Virtually uninterrupted peace prevailed in the area, thanks to the presence and activities of UNEF.

UNEF withdrawal

While quiet prevailed along the Egyptian-Israeli borders after November 1956, there was continued tension in other sectors of the Middle East, particularly on the Israel-Jordan and Israel-Syria fronts. After the creation, in 1964, of the Palestine Liberation Organization and its main group, El Fatah, there appeared to be a new level of organization and training of Palestinian commandos. Palestinian raids against Israel, conducted mainly from Jordanian and Syrian territory, became a regular occurrence, and the Israeli forces reacted with increasingly violent retaliation. There was a marked contrast between the quiet along the Egyptian border and the confrontation situation in other sectors.

In early 1967, tension between Israel and Syria again reached a critical level, mainly because of disputes over cultivation rights in the demilitarized zone near Lake Tiberias. For years, Syria complained that Israelis were illegally seizing lands belonging to Arab Palestinians in the demilitarized zone, and the cultivation of disputed land had led to frequent firing incidents between Israeli and Syrian forces. Efforts within the Mixed Armistice Commission failed. On 7 April 1967, an exchange of fire across disputed farmland led to heavy shelling of Israeli villages by Syrian artillery and intensive air attacks by Israel against Syrian targets – the most serious clash since 1956. The incidents of 7 April were followed by a heightening of tension in the entire region, despite appeals by Secretary-General U Thant for restraint, and the moderating efforts of UNTSO.

In the evening of 16 May, the UNEF Commander received a request from the Egyptian Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces for withdrawal of “all UN troops which installed OP's [observation posts] along our borders”. The General who handed the message to the Force Commander told him that UNEF must order immediate withdrawal from El Sabha and Sharm el Sheikh, commanding the Strait of Tiran and therefore access to the Red Sea and southern Israel. The UNEF Commander replied that he did not have authority to do that. The Secretary-General, on being informed, gave instructions to the Commander to be “firm in maintaining UNEF positions while being as understanding and as diplomatic as possible in your relations with local UAR [United Arab Republic] officials”. While the Secretary-General sought clarifications from Cairo, Egyptian troops moved onto UNEF's line, occupying some United Nations posts.

The Secretary-General met with members of the UNEF Advisory Committee and told them of the events in the field, making it known that if a formal request for UNEF's withdrawal came from the Egyptian Government he would have to comply. He pointed out that the Force was on Egyptian territory only with the consent of the Government and could not remain there without it. He also consulted members of the Security Council. The various meetings held by the Secretary-General showed that within the United Nations there was a deep division among the membership of the Advisory Committee and the Security Council on the course of action to be

followed. After consulting the Advisory Committee, the Secretary-General informed the representative of Egypt that while he did not question in any sense Egypt's authority to deploy its troops as it saw fit on its own territory, the deployment of Egyptian troops in areas where UNEF troops were stationed might have very serious implications for UNEF and its continued presence in the area.

In the meantime, the Egyptian Foreign Minister in Cairo summoned representatives of nations with troops in UNEF to inform them that UNEF had terminated its tasks in Egypt and the Gaza Strip and must depart forthwith. The Governments of India and Yugoslavia decided that, whatever the decision of the Secretary-General, they would withdraw their contingents from UNEF. The same day, 18 May, Egyptian soldiers prevented UNEF troops from entering their posts.

While these activities were taking place, the Secretary-General raised with the Israeli Government the question of stationing UNEF on the Israeli side of the Line, thus maintaining the buffer, but this was declared entirely unacceptable to Israel. Shortly thereafter, the Permanent Representative of Egypt delivered a message to the Secretary-General stating his Government's decision to terminate UNEF's presence in the territory of Egypt and the Gaza Strip and requesting steps for withdrawal as soon as possible. The Secretary-General informed contributing countries he would report to the General Assembly and the Security Council about the events, stating it was up to Member countries to decide whether the competent organs should or could take up the matter and pursue it accordingly. He then informed Egypt that the request would be complied with, while indicating his serious misgivings. UNEF's Commander was instructed to take the necessary action for withdrawal to begin on 19 May and end in the last days of June.

During two tense days from 16 to 18 May 1967, the Secretary-General did all he could to persuade Egypt not to request the withdrawal of UNEF and to persuade Israel to accept the Force on its side of the border. But neither Government agreed to cooperate. In such circumstances, the Secretary-General could have brought the matter before the Security Council by invoking Article 99 of the Charter, but he chose not to do so because he knew that with the United States and the Soviet Union firmly on opposing sides of the question, no action could be taken by the Council.

The fundamental fact is that United Nations peacekeeping operations are based on the principle of consent. To maintain UNEF in Egypt against the will of the Egyptian Government, even if it had been possible to do so, which was not the case, would have created a dangerous precedent which would have deterred potential host Governments from accepting future United Nations peacekeeping operations on their soil.

In the case of UNEF, its withdrawal would not have, in itself, necessarily led to war in the area. Following an appeal by the Secretary-General, the Government of Israel made it known to U Thant that it would exercise restraint but would consider a resumption of terrorist activities along the borders, or the closure of the Strait of Tiran to Israeli shipping, as *casus belli*. Immediately after the withdrawal of UNEF, the Secretary-General increased the number of UNTSO observers of the Egypt-Israel Mixed Armistice Commission to provide a United Nations presence along the Armistice Demarcation Line, and he arranged to visit Cairo on 22 May to discuss with the Egyptian Government possible security arrangements along the Egyptian-Israeli borders. However, just before he arrived in Cairo, President Nasser announced the

closure of the Strait of Tiran. With this decision the die was cast, and, on 5 June, full-fledged war erupted.

Some UNEF units which were awaiting repatriation were caught up in the fighting in Gaza, and 15 United Nations troops were killed. All military personnel had gone by 13 June, except for the Force Commander and a small group of staff officers who left on 17 June....