



Six Day War

In May 1967, growing tensions in region led Israel to expect that a potentially destructive catastrophic Arab attack was imminent.

Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser ordered a withdrawal of the U.N. Emergency Forces in the Sinai Peninsula and began amassing massive armies along Israel's Southern border. On May 22, Nasser announced a blockade of Israeli goods through the Straits of Tiran – the narrow maritime passage through which Israeli shipping accessed international markets – an act which Israel had long made clear would be seen as a declaration of war. At the same time, Syria, which had united in a military pact with Egypt to defeat Israel, mobilized its troops and increased border clashes along the Golan Heights.

During the tense month of May, despite feeling vulnerable to an expected Arab attack, Israel held back on military action to allow the diplomatic efforts, led by U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson, to stop the blockade and resolve the crisis. These efforts ultimately failed. Egypt, Syria, Jordan and other Arab states began to mobilize troops, and Arab leaders called for a war of total destruction against Israel.

Arab mobilization compelled Israel to mobilize its own troops, 80 percent of which were reserve civilians, with Israel fearing a coordinated attack along three borders. Israelis believed a war would result in mass casualties, and perhaps even the destruction of the nineteen year old Jewish State.

On June 4, Israel's cabinet voted 12-2 in favor of a preemptive strike, and on June 5, Israeli warplanes attacked the Egyptian air force, destroying most of its aircraft. Jordan and Syria soon entered the fray. In rapid speed, the smaller but better trained and commanded Israel Defense Forces captured the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip from Egypt and gained control of the West Bank, including the eastern sector of Jerusalem, from Jordan and the Golan Heights from Syria.

In a catastrophic military defeat – which shook the Arab world for years to come – the Arab nations ceased their fight six days after the war began.

This new territory brought great changes to Israeli daily life and created new challenges for policymakers. With the reunification of [Jerusalem](#), Israeli Jews, who had been prevented by Jordan from entering the eastern part of the city, flocked to pray at the Western Wall for the first time in 19 years. In the [West Bank and Gaza Strip](#), Israel had to grapple with the implications and challenges of having one million Palestinian Arabs now under its administration.

Soon after the end of the fighting, the United Nations passed [Security Council Resolution 242](#), calling for an Israeli withdrawal from “territories recently occupied” and an acknowledgment by the Arab nations of Israel's right to live in peace within secure borders.