

*Leadership, resourceful soldiers, air superiority,  
and outstanding marksmanship contributed  
significantly to Israeli success in*

# *The Arab- Israeli War*

*Major General R. L. Shoemaker, United States Army*



**I**T IS WRITTEN in the Book of Genesis:

*On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abraham, saying 'To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates. . . .'*

For 4,000 years, the Hebrew people have sought to convince the world—most recently the Arab world—that the Lord meant what he said.

Israel represents one-fourth of one percent of Arab-claimed lands—8,000 square miles of desert with no natural resources except a little copper, a trace of oil, and a narrow coastal strip of farmland. There seems little reason for the Jews to want to be there, or for the Arabs to resent their presence. Yet such is human nature that both are true.

The historic hostility of Jews and Arabs has been exacerbated since World War I, first by the mutual contradiction between the promise of a Jewish homeland of the Balfour Declaration and the British guarantees of a United Arab State, followed by the continuous, illegal immigration of Jews into the area, and culminating in the Jewish violence against the British and Arab efforts to halt the immigration.

This enmity came to a head in two Arab-Israeli wars prior to the most recent one. The first of these—a two-

month affair from May to July 1948—assured Israel's survival. One day after the withdrawal of the British under a United Nations resolution on 14 May of that year came an Egyptian air attack on Tel Aviv conveyed by a promise from the Secretary General of the Arab League: "This will be a war of extermination and a momentous massacre which will be spoken of like the Mongolian massacres and the Crusades." Despite these words, an early stalemate developed, and UN mediator Ralph Bunche arranged a series of individual truces between the several Arab States and Israel.

The war gave the Israelis a sense of national purpose and pride. On the other hand, it humiliated the Arabs, and the Jewish state became an obsession with them.

Of all the problems growing out of the war, none was more difficult than that of the 600,000 to 800,000 refugees, since grown to one and a quarter million. They exist in limbo with the Arab nations refusing to accept them as immigrants and the Israelis declining to take them back or to compensate them for loss of their land.

For eight years following the formal cease-fire in 1948, border clashes continued, largely initiated by Arab raiders. Beginning in 1952, Gamal Abdel Nasser beat the drum of hatred of Israel as the basis for a tenuous

Arab unit. In the fall of 1956, in a pattern to be repeated, he closed the Gulf of 'Aqaba to Israeli shipping, mobilized the Arab forces, and sounded the customary vituperation. On 29 October, Israel launched a preemptive war in the Sinai Peninsula. With the help of the French and British, who entered the war on 1 November, Israel reached the Suez in eight days and captured Sharm el-Sheik, the gateway to the Gulf of 'Aqaba.

### Accepts Cease-Fire

Subsequently, with the urging of the United States and the Soviet Union, Israel accepted a cease-fire, under the terms of which all occupied Egyptian land was evacuated and the United Nations took over the supervision of shipping into 'Aqaba and occupied the Gaza Strip. Israel refused to have UN observers on her soil although Egypt accepted them.

Neither cease-fire nor UN observers could stop the continued border

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clashes. These took many forms, but, by November 1966, had reached a point at which Israel invaded Jordan, burning a village in retaliation for raids mounted through Jordan. Israel was censured by the United Nations for this action. In April 1967, a Syrian-Israeli air engagement occurred, and six Syrian MiG's were destroyed.

On 15 May, clearly stung by Arab jibes at his inaction against Israel, Nasser began to reinforce his units in the Sinai Peninsula. Three days later, he demanded withdrawal of the UN observer force and began occupation of Sharm el-Sheik. By the 23d, most UN forces had gone, and Nasser once again closed the Gulf of 'Aqaba to Israel.

On 28 May, Arab leaders, including King Hussein of Jordan, mobilized their forces under Nasser; in a reprise to the refrains of 1956, Radio Cairo announced, "We intend to open a general assault against Israel. This will be total war. Our basic aim is the destruction of Israel." Israel reacted with partial mobilization, to be complete by 5 June, and there followed increasingly violent skirmishing.

### Fatal Misjudgment

Why was there war in June 1967?

Based on detailed conversations with a representation of the Arab League and with a senior Israeli official, it seems to me that the important immediate cause was a fatal misjudgment on both sides. The Arabs, underestimating Israel's mood after two decades of border harassment, heard Israeli threats largely in terms of their own frequent use of words: as an end in themselves. The United Arab Republic certainly overestimated her own relative strength.

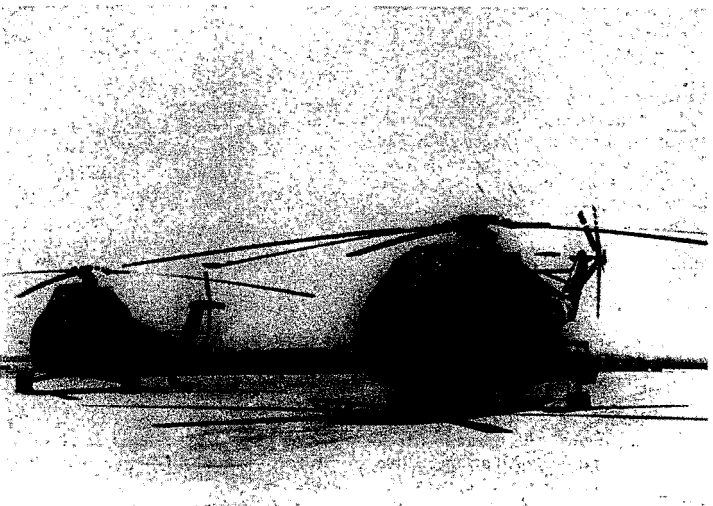
Similarly, Israel badly misjudged Arab feelings, forgetting how long

Palestine had been Arab land and how intensely the Arabs felt that Israel was a tool of Western imperialism.

The 1967 war can also be seen as a direct outgrowth of the 1956 Israeli invasion of Egypt. Encouraged by their Soviet advisors, the Arabs feared that Israel might repeat her attack and that they could not afford to be

world was a key factor. Only by matching the Baathist intransigence could Nasser hope to be acceptable as the leader of Pan-Arabism.

The Israeli High Command had always recognized that the basis of success in the Sinai Desert lay in air supremacy. At 0745 on 5 June, the United Arab Republic had a heavy



*Embassy of Israel*

**Israeli helicopters carried troops and supplies and picked up 14 downed pilots**

caught unprepared again. Perhaps most mistakenly of all, they took comfort in the belief that the world would not allow the situation to get out of hand.

It appears that the United Arab Republic might well have been surprised by the withdrawal of the UN peacekeeping force. Once the force was gone, the urge to reoccupy Sharm el-Sheik was irresistible.

Finally, the Egyptian-Syrian competition for leadership of the Arab

numerical advantage in combat aircraft; less than two hours later, Israeli aircraft were unchallenged anywhere in the combat zone.

Based on a careful estimate of the situation, exact knowledge of Egyptian tactical habits and capabilities, and a precise understanding of time and space factors, Israel planned and executed a synchronized attack which arrived simultaneously over about a dozen selected Egyptian airbases. Fighter bombers from Tel Aviv air-

fields struck Egyptian bases in the Sinai and in the Canal Zone. Twin-engined *Vautours* flew down the Gulf of 'Aqaba to hit others in the Nile Valley. All were *MiG-21* or bomber bases. Subsequent attacks hit seven more airfields on which were located *Su-7* fighter bombers and *MiG-17's* and *MiG-19's*. A calculated, successful risk was taken in leaving 14 other Egyptian bases alone.

The aircraft came in at low level at their maximum speed, making the approach itself under conditions of radio silence. The strategy was completely successful; there was simply no Egyptian reaction, even when the border was crossed. Using 30-millimeter cannon as the big killers of aircraft on the ground, Israel knocked out the great bulk of the United Arab Republic's firstline air strength in the first strike. Radars were shot up to reduce interference with subsequent attacking waves. The extreme accuracy of the Israeli fire, a result of exhaustive training, was particularly devastating.

### A Great Gamble

Without doubt, the Israeli attack was a great gamble with an incredible payoff. Behind the planning was the commander of the Israeli Air Force, Brigadier General Mordechai Hod, a former British infantry officer. Hod conceived, sold, planned, and executed the attack. His pilots clearly heard his doctrine, "If you resort to dog fights you have failed, for you should get them on the ground."

By 1100 on 5 June, Hod began to shift his fighter bombers to close support of the armored columns in the Sinai. Just before noon, Jordan and Syria launched ineffective hit-and-run attacks on Haifa and the Israeli airfields. Responding promptly, Israel struck Jordan and Syrian bases, es-

entially finishing the job in an hour, during which the air force destroyed all 18 Jordanian British-built *Hunter* aircraft (17 on the ground) and eliminated the Syrian Air Force as an effective fighting element.

Following the poorly executed bomber attack by an Iraqi *Tu-16*, which was shot down by 40-millimeter cannon fire, the Iraqi airfield H-3 was attacked on 6 June. Resident elements of the Iraqi Air Force, a squadron of *Hunters*, were destroyed in this effort.

### Evasive Maneuvers

So nearly were the skies swept of Arab aircraft that no planes challenged the Israelis until late on 5 June and then only in random dogfights which ended by midday on the 6th. The highly touted, Egyptian-manned, Soviet *SA-2* missile system did no damage to the Israeli Air Force. A combination of Egyptian ineptness and Israeli tactics, including evasive maneuvers, saw to this.

In the course of the war, the Israelis flew more than 1,000 close support missions. Their pilots doubled the planned numbers of daily sorties, and aircraft availability was incredibly high.

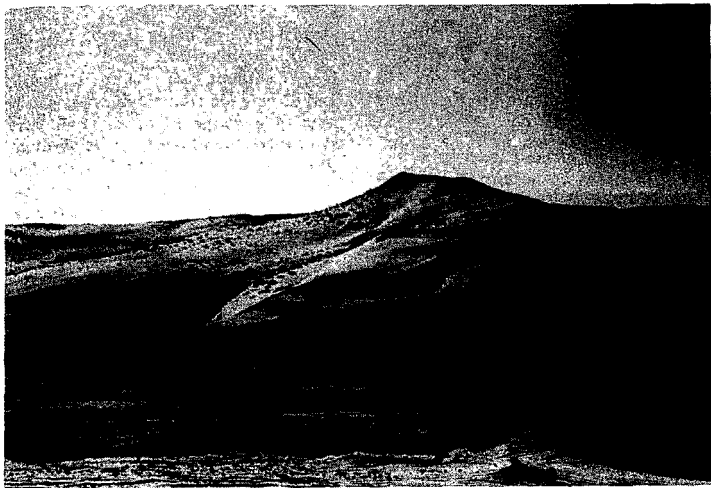
Although several assault air drops were planned, the rapid advances on the ground negated the requirement, and none was executed. On the other hand, helicopters were widely used: in the attack on Golan Heights in Syria, in landing an infantry battalion behind the Abu Ageila gun positions in the Sinai Peninsula, and in the occupation of Sharm el-Sheik.

The Israeli helicopters, like all other aircraft, are assigned to the air force and normally operate under centralized control. Despite the hazards of night operations, occasional jet attacks, *SA-2* missiles, and ground fire,

no Israeli helicopters were lost during the war. In addition to their troop and supply-carrying activities, the helicopters picked up 14 downed pilots.

Long before the war, Major General Moshe Dayan had recognized the potential of the helicopter for desert

rupted by huge dunes. No grass grows in the Sinai, only a few low shrubs. Except for an occasional raven or a displaced jackel, there is virtually no wildlife. Away from the coastal areas, only an estimated 16,000 Bedouin wander the bleak land; west of the



Jac Weller

The Sinai is marked by drifting sands interrupted by huge dunes

warfare. After a visit to South Vietnam, he observed:

*U. S. warfare in Vietnam is primarily helicopter war—the 1st Air Cavalry Division is the organizational and tactical expression of the imaginative use of the helicopter in battle.*

The Sinai is one of the least inviting places in the world. The fact that anyone assigns a value to it, much less fights over it, is a good measure of the feelings between the Egyptians and Israelis. Rugged barren mountains rise in the south and extend northward almost to the sea. On the way, they encounter drifting sands inter-

117-mile frontier with Israel, there are 125 miles of this wasteland before the Suez.

By 5 June, the United Arab Republic had seven divisions—five infantry and two armored—in the Sinai, including the 20th Palestinian in the Gaza Strip. Much of this force was deployed behind concrete fortifications systematically entrenched with mined hedgehogs miles deep; the Egyptians may have learned Soviet defensive tactics too literally. The units were equipped with the latest Soviet tanks, artillery, mortars, rockets, and excellent communication equipment.

Concurrent with Arab shelling of Israeli villages bordering the Gaza Strip, by 0815 on the 5th—30 minutes after the air attack—three Israeli divisions were moving into the Sinai: one into the Gaza Strip, one due west, and one curving to the southwest. As in 1956, Israel's main objective was the Egyptian Army, and, accordingly, Sinai was to be the main theater.

Somewhat to the surprise of the Israelis, in many places the Egyptians fought bravely, if not skillfully, at least until turned out of their defensive positions.

### Sharp Engagements

To the north at Gaza, and subsequently along the coastal roads, Brigadier General Israel Tal moved rapidly and destroyed substantial amounts of Egyptian equipment, particularly in fixed defenses. Nevertheless, it was not an easy advance as there were many sharp engagements—tank against tank. His gunners fired accurately; shooting at 875 to 1,300 yards, the Egyptian firing was essentially inaccurate. Here, as elsewhere, Israeli officer losses were heavy.

To the southwest, Brigadier General Ariel (Arik) Sharon's division-sized task force had a long way to go, but suffered fewer casualties. The distribution, however, was no different. In his first battalion engagement, he lost a company commander and three platoon leaders killed and two company commanders wounded. He continuously outfought the Egyptians; fortunately for them, however, Israeli logistic problems caught up with him on 6 June, and his division ran out of gasoline. Typically, his operations were characterized by daring, expert gunnery, and skillful night fighting.

Brigadier General Avraham Yoffe's division fought to the west and south-

west. Like Sharon, never before having commanded tanks, he took his armored division to the Mitla Pass where he participated with the air force in the *coup de grace* of the United Arab Republic's desert army.

The accounts of Yoffe's operation reflect serious problems of control; a steady state of being out of gasoline, water, ammunition, and food; of troops without real rest for 42 hours; and of brigade commanders personally putting gasoline in tanks from jerry cans with Egyptians 1,100 yards away. They also reflect the ultimate in battlefield improvisation, the great superiority of Israeli armor employment to that of the Egyptians, and the characteristic use of night operations.

Israel made good use of captured airfields, selectively unbombed, and of Egyptian fuel and arms. Close support aircraft and a variety of transports—such as C-47's and modified *Stratocruisers*—used the fields for air resupply of water, fuel, and ammunition, and to evacuate wounded.

The campaign cost the Egyptians heavily; estimates run as high as 600 tanks lost, 15,000 Egyptians killed, and 10,000 captured. In terms of total tanks involved and of results, the Sinai operations must rank among the greatest of armored battles ever fought.

### Jordan Campaign

The Jordan campaign found the Jordan side of the Israel-Jordan border strongly held by an Arab force of nine infantry, two tank and one mechanized brigades, and five artillery battalions—a 155-millimeter gun, two 105-millimeter self-propelled, and two 25-pounder battalions. Arriving too late was an Iraqi division which took no part in the operations.

Despite this formidable force, the

Israeli Central Commander, General Uri Narkis, estimated that Jordan would not initiate hostilities. His mission, reflecting the relative priority of the area, was entirely defensive. With his reservist force of three infantry and one mechanized battalions, reinforced by assorted home guard units, he was to defend the sector, seal off any penetrations, and to attack only if key ground was lost. An armored brigade east of Tel Aviv was a possible reserve.

#### Counterattack Ordered

In an early correction of Israeli estimates, at 0800 on 5 June, Jordan opened fire on Israeli positions with artillery and seized the UN government house in the Jerusalem demilitarized zone. Using forces locally available, Narkis ordered a counterattack and, by midafternoon, had driven the Jordanians from the government house.

Reflecting less than perfect planning, the airborne troops arrived with little equipment. It was still loaded on Tel Aviv airfields for the air drop. Also, they had no reconnaissance of the area. Despite these shortcomings, a night attack of Jerusalem was ordered and, not unexpectedly, temporarily failed.

By the next day, the situation was better organized and pressures were reduced by Israeli Northern Command attacks from the north. Even so, because of the difficult terrain and the fact that the Jordanians fought extremely well, progress was slow and casualties heavy. In one battalion engagement, every Israeli tank commander was hit. Nevertheless, in no small part because of the vastly better Israeli shooting ability, key terrain was seized, and Jerusalem was secured by midmorning of 7 June.

The Israelis were not without their sense of history and of their Old Testament heritage, for, in their attack on Jericho, they remembered the instructions of the Lord to Joshua as recorded in Joshua:

*And seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of ram's horns . . . and on the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, the priests blowing the trumpets. And when they make a long blast with the ram's horn . . . the wall of the city will fall down flat. . . .*

The modern Israelis took the city in two hours instead of seven days, but they had brought their trumpets, captured in Jerusalem, and let history record that they blew them. Fortunately for Jericho, Narkis did not follow Joshua's precedent of utterly destroying the city.

The Jordan campaign ended on 8 June with the mopping up of the west bank of the Jordan River.

#### Syrian Campaign

In many respects, the problem facing the Israelis on the Syrian border was the most difficult of all. This was not because of the quality of the Syrian armed forces, which was low, but because of the difficulty of the terrain which was considerable. Along the entire frontier stretches the Golan Plateau, a natural battlement of black volcanic rock, rising 1,000 feet in a mile and a half.

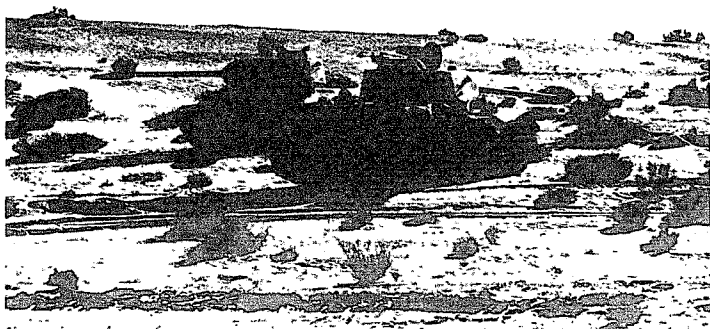
Supplementing the natural strength of the area, the Syrians had emplaced concrete pillboxes, mines, and barbed wire 110 yards broad, and bombproof galleries and fire trenches on the military crests, all connected by bombproof tunnels. An attacker from the Israeli side of the border finds literally no cover for his approach. Nevertheless, it was certain the Israeli would

attack, for they owed a special debt to the Syrians after 20 years of border incursions and artillery shelling.

By 1 June, the Syrians had 45,000 men between Damascus and the border, with eight brigades in the forward area backed up by additional infantry and mechanized brigades. Despite this strong force and the fact

Jordanian tank gunnery was no better here than elsewhere; Eleazar's *Shermans* habitually got off two rounds before the Jordanian *Pattons* fired their first.

At 0700 on 9 June, Eleazar was ordered to attack Syria, an order he obeyed enthusiastically although he had only one infantry brigade and two



Jac Weller

These two *T34's* were part of the estimated 600 tanks lost by the Egyptians

that Israel had essentially stripped her side of the border, the Syrian Army rested on the first day. On the next, three halfhearted armored attacks supported by artillery were beaten back by the Israelis with little difficulty.

As a result of this Syrian ineffectiveness, the Northern Commander, General David Eleazar, was able to shift two brigades to the south of the Sea of Galilee for operations against Jordan, significantly easing the pressure against the Jerusalem operations.

tank battalions that had not fought in Jordan. Finding his air support more psychological than physically effective as a result of the strength of the position, he directed a necessarily slow movement of his infantry toward the fortress of Tel Fakhr, the northern gate to the defense.

Immediately and characteristically, there were severe losses among the officers. The assault battalion commander, his executive officer, and all company commanders were killed in the first hour. In one company, eight

men were left when the fire trenches were reached. However, when the fortress fell, the bottom dropped out of the Syrian Army. By dusk on 10 June, the Israelis occupied all of the Syrian hill positions overlooking the border.

#### Analysis of Success

An understanding of Israel's spectacular success against the Arabs requires an understanding of the very special circumstances under which the success was achieved. As other writers—including Brigadier General S. L. A. Marshall, US Army Reserve, Retired—have pointed out, these are found in the nation itself, its people, its psychology, and its situation, and, perhaps, equally importantly, in the nature of the armed forces which are so much a part of the people.

In the broader context of the nation itself, several factors emerge:

- There is a subtle, although tremendously important, difference philosophically between the Jews and the Arabs; where the Jew fights facts—such as that his nation cannot possibly win against the overwhelming odds facing it—the Arab accepts them. It is the will of Allah.

- There exists among the Israeli people a feeling of isolation, engendering a strong bond of national solidarity. The Western Powers, the Communist bloc, and the United Nations, all to some degree, are viewed as hostile or, at best, indifferent.

- The armed forces enjoyed the strong and unequivocal support of the civil population.

- The total effort of the Jewish people was concentrated on defense of the homeland.

- The manpower—and womanpower—of the nation was kept prepared through constant, rigorous self-

defense exercises, sometimes directed toward actual enemy incursions. In short, Israel had never known peace.

- Israel developed her own answer to suit her special military needs and people in the particular enemy and war she faced.

On the other hand, Israel faced some serious disadvantages as compared to 1956. The bulk of the Egyptian forces were east of the Suez in June 1967, equipped with an enormous quantity of modern Soviet weapons and strengthened by 10 years of Soviet training. This time the French and British were not on hand to pin down substantial Arab forces, an absence which greatly increased the possibility of having to fight on three fronts simultaneously.

#### Special Conditions

As is true of every nation, there were special conditions in Israel determining the kind of armed forces she would have. All functioning against the background of an essential state of war, these included:

- Limited perspective. Israel need concern herself only with the precisely identifiable operations required to defend her territory against a specific enemy.

- Limitation of geography. Israel suffers from most of the problems common to artificially created states. Small, with no natural obstacles guarding her borders, she has no room in which to regroup after initial reverses such as our own Pearl Harbor. Clearly, geography dictated no military mistakes.

- Limitation of time. In part because of her geography, Israel is also a slave of time. Together with geography, this limitation dictated preemptive war—and the initial strike had to succeed.

● Limitations of manpower and money. These limitations led to a small professional career force with the great bulk of the armed forces, especially the army, found in a ready reserve.

The reserve-based army, which is not "professional" in the Western sense, played a large role in the war. Its 289,000 men and women, of a total population of 2.7 million, are essentially bus drivers turned tank drivers, farmers turned riflemen, and bank presidents turned division commanders on short notice. The regular army has only a small cadre of senior officers, warrant officers, and noncommissioned officers, with all officers moving up from the ranks.

### Armed Forces Composition

The great body of the standing army is composed of 2½-year inductees who include nearly all 18-year-old males. Physical and mental exemptions are granted when the disability is virtually complete. Deferments are almost unknown. Women are also called up for training although only about 25 percent of those eligible can be accommodated. They receive nearly the same training as the male soldier, including combat operations.

After the 30 months of active duty for enlisted personnel and 42 in the case of officers, the Israeli citizen remains in the active reserve until age 49. An obvious problem is how to organize, train, and keep this reserve up to date so as to meet the requirement of mobilization in 24 hours and taking the field in 48. The reservist trains one day a month in a brief refresher in weapons and field operations and devotes a month a year to intensive field training. This period is five to six weeks for officers. Because of the national danger, the military profes-

sion in Israel—regular and reserve—attracts the best in the country.

Mobilization is speeded by concentrating each brigade in a geographical area served by locally stocked depots. A special incentive exists in the border areas by a provision in the war plans for the commitment of the brigade across its own frontier. This was



*Jac Weller*

Former Syrian hill positions overlooking the border

exemplified in the eagerness of the troops of the Northern Command to move against the Syrians.

Another striking feature of the Israeli armed forces is the youth of its senior officers. At the outbreak of hostilities, General Itzhak Rabin, Chief of Staff of the Army, was 41; Mordechai Hod of the air force, 40; the commanders of all three geographical areas were 41 or 42; and one of the division commanders was 38, another 42, and only one was of the age accepted in most armies, 54. All of the brigade commanders were in their early forties or younger.

Throughout, the Israeli armed forces lack the outward forms of dis-

cipline and neatness; saluting is essentially a matter of mood instead of established custom. Its members are more civilian than soldier; they share an informal first-name relationship.

### **Military Daring**

General S. L. A. Marshall has said that the Israeli armed forces were successful by extending the limits of military daring. Certainly, it is true that the emphasis in battle is on improvising rather than following even broad plans. There is great attention to communications and to mobility. Night operations are standard.

In response to the dictum that officers should lead, not push, their losses were extremely high in the war; officer casualties in the six days came to 25 percent as compared to less than 10 percent of the army as a whole.

I recently discussed the war with Israel's Chief of Operations, and his synthesis of military directives for leaders reads something like this: Attack always, initially with surprise, then with unremitting pressure, improvising, risking, and never waiting for supplies.

Israel's Chief of Operations, General Weizman, put it all in context when he said:

*The military world has become a victim of its own sophistication in weaponry; bewildered by the technology of the atom age, it has forgotten that brains, nerve, heart, and imagination are all beyond the capacity of the computer. No computer can go beyond the call of duty, but that's what medals are given for.*

In support of the operational doctrine, Israel employs an imaginative, commonsense system of training which places the individual soldier on his own. Although he savors his independence, he still follows orders.

The inductee's two and one-half years of service are devoted entirely to basic and advanced individual training of a type far tougher physically than that given in the United States. Hard combat exercises, scouting missions, marksmanship, and physical conditioning are emphasized. Little formal parade drill is provided. Fifty percent of the training ammunition allowance is allotted to actual tactical problems where overpowering attention is devoted to basic military skills.

Units are trained for years in terms of particular pieces of geography. For example, those brigades which fought in the Sinai had precise knowledge of terrain and routes, possessed maps and aerial photographs in profusion, and had the benefit of expert knowledge of soil trafficability and other physical features of the land.

### **Professional Knowledge**

There are no foreign advisors with the Israeli armed forces although most high-level commanders and staff officers have studied in the staff colleges of the United States, Great Britain, and France. Most senior officers have had extensive combat experience: World War II as members of the British Army, service in the Irgun or Haganah after the war, the 1948 War of Independence, and the war of 1956. The professional knowledge of these officers is, accordingly, impressive.

Organizationally, the brigade is the basic combat unit and is self-sufficient in the same manner as our division. A typical armored brigade has a battalion of medium tanks, one of French AMX light tanks, one of mechanized infantry, one of self-propelled 105's or 25-pounders, and necessary supporting troops. The infantry brigade is comparable to the old US regiment

with fewer heavy weapons. Divisions are actually task forces of two to five brigades under command of a temporary headquarters activated for an emergency.

Rather unexpectedly, the Israeli Army is not particularly good at motor maintenance or battlefield repair based on formal schooling. The fighters do their own baling-wire maintenance, often based on experience with tractors on farms. As a matter of fact, the Israeli Command as a whole professes a low regard for logistics which seems inconsistent with its recognition of the vital importance of tracked vehicles in desert operations.

### Israeli Airpower

The combat elements of the Israeli Air Force are built around the fighter bomber, seen as more versatile than the medium bomber. The backbone of the air force is the *Mirage III-C*, and the aging *Vautour*, both French. At the insistence of the Israelis, the *Mirage* was modified to carry two 30-millimeter cannon instead of the usual rockets which the Israelis considered too inaccurate for their standards. A jet trainer, *Fouga Magister*, the only type aircraft assembled in Israel, played a highly successful role as a tank killer during the war.

In the Book of Numbers:

*The Lord said to Moses, 'Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I give to the people of Israel'. . . . Moses sent them to spy out Canaan and said to them, 'Go up into the Sinai yonder and go up into the hill country and see what the land is, and whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, whether they are few or many . . . and whether their cities are camps or strongholds. . . .*

In the intervening 3,000 years, the

Israelis have not lost their appreciation of the vital role of intelligence. It is probable that no commander was ever furnished better information of the enemy than were the Israelis of the Egyptian strength, disposition, and habits. Aerial reconnaissance, agents, technical intelligence, and combat patrolling were all used with skill and effectiveness.

### Arab Armed Forces

Unlike the Israeli native-based and conceived armed forces, the Arabs suffered from efforts to operate in terms of the needs and capabilities of foreign nations. Thus, the Egyptians and Syrians were advised and equipped in Soviet terms and were simply not up to using this sophisticated equipment skillfully. The Jordanian Army, on the other hand, was a British creation.

The quality of the Arab armed forces varied widely. Jordan's Arab Legion, although a far cry from the hard-hitting force it had been under Lieutenant General Sir John B. Glubb and his British officers, was still a reasonably professional organization. The Syrians, although violent in talk, were undisciplined, untrained, and were lost once they were dug out of the fortifications on the Golan Plateau.

S. L. A. Marshall reports that, in the view of the Israelis at least, Egyptian officers were not professionals at their jobs. They had no concept of discipline, precision, thoroughness of preparation, obligation of leadership, or execution of mission. Their soldiers, conscripted in large part from the peasant farmers, the fellahin, were generally illiterate, undernourished, not interested in fighting, and lacked any real bond with their officers.

The Egyptian forces were further saddled by being trained too deeply in

Soviet defense tactics which were ill-suited to desert operations or to the highly mobile tactics of the Israelis. They were stuck with—and in—the Soviet concept of the three-line defense in depth. The Israelis simply ran around, behind, and, where necessary, through these defenses, customarily concentrating on destroying the artillery first.

Nevertheless, the Egyptians were well equipped in terms of materiel. The United Arab Republic alone had more tanks and twice as many aircraft as the Israelis.

A number of factors contributed significantly to the Israeli success:

- Possession of a homeland under mortal attack. This led to a dedicated sense of mission.

- Professional leadership which provided precisely the degree of inspiration and military competence needed. It also furnished a fine sense of the dramatic, as when General Hod personally attended the exchange of 550 Syrian prisoners of war for one Israeli flyer.

- Resourceful soldiers fighting to avoid annihilation. The Arabs did well as long as they were in prepared defenses, but were not able to adjust once the Israelis had gained entry into their positions. They also had no such motivation as their opponents.

- Air superiority achieved through the initial preemptive airstrikes. Based on this superiority, close air support played a major role in the speed of the Israeli advance.

- Excellent command and control procedures. The Arabs, on the other hand, experienced considerable difficulty with coordination.

- The maintenance of continuous pressure on the Arab forces throughout which was accomplished in large measure by the night fighting which the Arabs fear and the Israelis favor.

- Outstanding marksmanship, particularly in air and tank gunnery. Israeli tanks often were able to destroy Arab armor at extreme ranges far beyond that at which the return fire was effective.

- Excellent intelligence concerning the Arabs was a significant factor to military success.

- Israel's inadequate attention to logistics did not really catch up with her units during the short length of the war.

- Lack of a sense of urgency on the part of the Arabs, particularly the Egyptians, who did not seem to appreciate fully the Israeli strike capabilities, either before or during combat.

No man can say whether we have witnessed simply act III of an endless play of Arab-Israeli wars or whether both sides will somehow recognize that "finis" should now be written. Certainly, there are few signs of the second development which may simply prove there can be no real peace until one side or the other suffers a final, thorough defeat. Whatever the future, the Israelis can count on strong support, for as recorded in the Book of Exodus:

*And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called him out the mountain, saying, 'Thus you shall tell the people of Israel: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings. . . .'*