

Landing exercises were carried out with the Commandos and 6th Royal Tank Regiment at MALTA.

It was in the Command and control field and especially with regard to Signal exercises where we were most handicapped and it is a great credit to all the Headquarters and Signal staffs that in the event communications worked so well.

Early in October Task Force Commanders had pressed for a Command Signal Exercise in particular to exercise the Headquarters ship. This exercise, called Exercise BOATHOOK, was agreed in October and planned to take place early in November; in the end it never took place.

Israeli Mobilisation

During the last week in October intelligence sources were reporting from TEL AVIV and elsewhere increasingly strong indications of Israeli mobilisation. As a result of these reports certain precautions were taken as regards the preparedness of our forces.

On October 29th ISRAEL attacked across the SINAI Peninsula.

THREE

Situation on 30th October

On 30th October I was informed that Her Majesty's Government were issuing a requirement to ISRAEL and EGYPT:—

- (a) to cease hostilities by land, sea and air;
- (b) to withdraw contestant troops ten miles from the SUEZ CANAL;
- (c) to allow occupation by Anglo-French Forces of PORT SAID, ISMAILIA and SUEZ.

I was to be prepared to take action on 31st October in the event of this requirement not being met by either country.

It was therefore clear that instead of 10 days interval between the executive order and the start of operations I was liable to get about 10 hours, and our operations might well be quite different to those for which we had planned.

There was much to be done.

Of the many immediate steps to be taken the most important were:—

- (a) To complete the preparedness of the Allied Air Force.
- (b) To embark and sail the British Assault Force from MALTA and the French Assault Force from the WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN.
- (c) To embark and sail the immediate follow-up forces from MALTA, the WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN and the UNITED KINGDOM.
- (d) To open up all Command Signal nets between my Allied Force Headquarters, Task Force Headquarters and formations.

Allied Forces were then located as follows:—

NAVAL FORCES

British and French Naval Forces were then in the general area of the CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN.

LAND FORCES

British

16 Independent Parachute Brigade in CYPRUS.

3 Commando Brigade and 6 Royal Tanks in MALTA.

10 Armoured Division in LIBYA.

3 Infantry Division in the UNITED KINGDOM.

French

10 Division Aeroportée partly in CYPRUS.

7 Division Mecanique Rapide in ALGERIA.

AIR FORCES

British

Bomber force in CYPRUS and MALTA.

3 Ground attack squadrons in CYPRUS.

French

2 Ground attack squadrons in CYPRUS.

FOUR

The Plan of Operations

At 0430 hours 31st October I was informed that the ISRAELI Government had agreed the requirement and that EGYPT had refused.

My object was defined as follows:—

- (i) To bring about a cessation of hostilities between ISRAEL and EGYPTIAN forces.
- (ii) To interpose my forces between those of ISRAEL and EGYPT.
- (iii) To occupy PORT SAID, ISMAILIA and SUEZ.

The agreement to our requirements by the ISRAELIS and the refusal by the EGYPTIANS meant that we were now involved in operations against the EGYPTIANS but with limited objectives.

My instructions were that air operations against the EGYPTIANS would start on 31st October.

My estimate of the Egyptian strength at this time was as follows, not taking into account such forces as were known to have been engaged in the SINAI Peninsula:—

Egyptian Air Force

- 80 MIG 15's
- 45 IL 28 bombers
- 25 Meteors
- 57 Vampires
- 200 trainers, communication and transport

Egyptian Army

- 75,000 Infantry
- 300 tanks which included over 150 modern Russian tanks (JS 3's, T 34's and T 85's).

An unknown number of self-propelled anti-tank guns, including the modern Russian SU 100's.

A considerable number of anti-aircraft guns and a modern radar organisation.

My main concern was naturally that of speed. Certain parts of the previous plans could fit in with the operation which I was now required to carry out; certain of them could not.