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Israeli Units Cross Jordan, Wipe Out El Fatah Bases in Twelve-Hour Operation

TEL AVIV, Mar. 21 (JTA)--Israeli Army units, spear-headed by helicopter-borne paratroops and supported by air force units invaded Jordan today to carry out a massive but limited military operation with the objective of destroying the bases used by El Fatah and other Arab terrorist gangs for raids and sabotage incursions against Israel. By three o'clock this afternoon, twelve hours after the Israeli troops marched, the first units returned to their bases, their objectives largely achieved. Other Israeli units were expected to return to Israel-held territory in the next few hours.

According to the latest reports, an estimated 150 El Fatah terrorists were killed as well as a large number of Jordanian soldiers. El Fatah bases in central and southern Jordan were destroyed along with their arsenals of weapons and high explosives. At least 15 Jordanian tanks were destroyed and two were captured intact. The operation, referred to by military spokesmen as a "skirmish" rather than a war, cost Israel 17 soldiers killed and 60 wounded, most of them slightly. One Israeli jet plane was hit by anti-aircraft fire and crashed in Israel-held territory after its pilot bailed out. Six Israeli armored vehicles were hit.

Israeli forces crossed into Jordan at two points, beginning at 3 o'clock this morning, local time. Carameh village in the central sector, the main staging base for El Fatah raids, and its adjacent refugee camp were seized by paratroops landed from helicopters who immediately began to weed out El Fatah members from among the population. At the same time, infantry and armored units crossed into Jordan over the Allenby Bridge, near Jericho, and the Damiyah Bridge, several miles to the North, in a pincer movement intended to cut off the El Fatah from escape eastward into Jordan and from support by Jordanian regulars.

A parallel assault was launched north and south of the Dead Sea where Israeli units speedily captured the Jordanian villages of Dahal, Sissi, Asafel, Wadi Hinzir and Saffi which had served as springboards for El Fatah raids into southern Israel. Police stations in the villages were demolished.

Israeli troops operated under strict orders not to harm the civilian population, women or children. Leaflets were distributed advising civilians to keep calm, remain indoors and place any arms in their possession in the street.

Operation Undertaken to Avert New Wave of Terrorist Acts, Eshkol Tells Knesset

Prime Minister Eshkol addressed the Knesset (Parliament) early this afternoon following a helicopter visit to the fighting from along the East bank of the Jordan. He declared that the operation had been ordered to forestall new, more serious outbreaks of terror launched from Jordanian territory. He cited 37 cases of sabotage within a single month, climaxed by Monday's mining of a school bus loaded with children on a Negev road. Once again, the Prime Minister said, Israel was forced to take arms to defend itself. He announced the casualties and extended condolences to the families of the fallen men.

Maj. Gen. Chaim Bar-Lev, the Chief of Staff, reported tonight to a special Cabinet meeting on the day's operations and Foreign Minister Abba S. Eban briefed his colleagues on the political and international aspects of the situation. The Cabinet sent special greetings and wishes for his speedy recovery to Defense Minister Moshe Dayan. Gen. Dayan, hospitalized since suffering painful injuries in a cave-in at an archaeological site near here yesterday, kept in touch with the battle front via a direct telephone line to his room in the Tel Hashomer Hospital.

Observers here predicted that Jordan would hail the pre-arranged Israeli withdrawal as a "victory." They pointed out however, that Israeli armored units and planes, after stifling Jordanian resistance, moved about almost at will in the area of operations. Large clouds of black smoke viewed from a height overlooking the Allenby Bridge, testified to the destruction of El Fatah arms and munitions stores.

The large concentration of El Fatah members was met at Carameh where they were holed up in tunnels in a tactic used by the Viet Cong. Smoke bombs routed them out. One injured terrorist was found bound and gagged so that his cries would not reveal the El Fatah hiding place. Large quantities of mines, machine guns, submachine guns and assault rifles were found in the village.

Eye-Witness Describes Action As Local Strikes Rather Than Large-Scale Offensive

(JTA Staff Correspondent Amos Ben-Vered transmitted the following eye-witness account of the Israeli sweep of the east bank of the Jordan Thursday.)

JERUSALEM, Mar. 21 (JTA)--A visit to the fighting area this morning showed that the Israeli army had reverted to tactics of local strikes similar to the ones used before the June war. From a mountaintop north of Jericho, this correspondent clearly saw the fighting area. Few planes were seen overhead. In one hour, only two Israeli jet fighters passed above, one dropping its bombload.

This is in marked contrast to the Six-Day War, in which sorties flew overhead, wave after wave. The scene today could be classified as a skirmish rather than a war. Less than 20 miles from the heavy fighting area, sheep and goats were out grazing.

In Jericho, shops were open and some people were seen on streets but cafes were empty. Business was generally slow because Israelis and tourists, who make up the town's main shoppers, had been barred from entering this ancient town since yesterday. Outside Jericho, roads were lined with army supply trucks, some of them carrying ammunition. There was no attempt at camouflaging them.

None of the few planes Jordan still has took to the sky nor did Jordan attempt to shell Israeli-held towns or military bases in the West Bank as happened previously. However, it did use artillery against the Israeli troops who penetrated the East Bank behind Jordanian lines. Israeli planes went into action against these artillery bases.

Mission To Destroy El Fatah Bases Was Accomplished, Bar-Lev Reports

TEL AVIV, Mar. 21 (JTA)--Gen. Chaim Bar-Lev, Israel's Chief of Staff, reported tonight that the last of Israel's troops have left the Jordanian east bank area, which they attacked this morning but that the Jordanians had not ceased shooting and that artillery exchanges with Israeli units were continuing. He also reported that the Israeli casualty list had reached 17 killed and 60 injured.

Gen. Bar-Lev also told a press conference that the operation, which began early this morning, was not a reprisal nor a retaliation raid but one which had a single objective -- to eliminate centers and members of the El Fatah terrorist organization operating against Israeli targets from Jordanian territory. He said also that Israel had hoped that after the last prior action on Feb. 15, Jordan would take action to check El Fatah incursions but that King Hussein's regime did nothing. Israel was forced to act and it did, he said.

He also asserted that the purpose of the operation today had been achieved. Three bases of El Fatah -- the largest center in Jordan in the Carameh village northeast of Jericho, Saffi and Hirbel Hinzir south of the Dead Sea -- were destroyed. He said 150 Fatah members who resisted surrender were killed in action and that others were taken for interrogation. He reported that, in addition to weapons captured in the action, maps and operational plans were found. He stressed that only the terrorists were the objective and that no civilian -- and specifically no women or children -- were hit, to the best of his knowledge.

Eban Tells Jarring Israel Will Continue to Support His Mission

JERUSALEM, Mar. 21 (JTA)--Foreign Minister Abba Eban cited today's Israeli military operation against El Fatah terrorist bases in Jordan during the course of a 90-minute meeting today with the U.N. special representative to the Middle East, Ambassador Gunnar Jarring. Mr. Eban reportedly told the U.N. envoy that the latest developments once again proved the dangers inherent in the present situation which will last as long as there are no peace negotiations and as long as the Arab states refuse to recognize Israel. He noted that the Arab governments continue to sponsor and activate large-scale terrorist groups in violation of their undertakings under last June's cease-fire agreements. Mr. Eban told Ambassador Jarring that Israel continues to support his peace-seeking mission and is ready to negotiate with any or all Arab governments under his auspices.

It is believed that Mr. Eban, not Dr. Jarring, raised the subject of today's military action inasmuch as the latter felt it was too late for mediation. The U.N. envoy came here from Cyprus after visiting Amman yesterday. He is not believed to have brought any further information for the Jordanian capital since his last visit in which he informed Israel that Jordan had rejected his proposal to send representatives to a preliminary meeting on Cyprus. Dr. Jarring returned to Nicosia tonight.

Political observers said here tonight that the re-opening of the Israel-Arab dispute before the Security Council may put an end to Ambassador Jarring's mission. Ambassador Jarring is known to have opposed a renewed appeal to the Security Council as long as his mission was active. But today's developments have brought both Israel and Jordan before the world forum once again. And while their representations are technically confined to the immediate armed clash it is felt that today's episode cannot be isolated. If the Arabs heap accusations on Israel and charge Jerusalem with responsibility for the present deadlock, Israel would have no choice but to present the Security Council with a documented record of its talks with Ambassador Jarring. Dr. Jarring too, would probably be forced to take sides to clarify his personal views. The lifting of the secrecy which has so far veiled his delicate probings for peace in the Middle East could, observers say, mark the end of the Jarring mission.

United States, Soviet Union, Britain in Accord in Condemning Israeli Action

WASHINGTON, Mar. 21 (JTA)--The United States, Britain and the Soviet Union were in accord today in their condemnation of the Israeli military action to eliminate bases on the east bank of the Jordan River from which Arab guerrillas have been conducting terrorist activities against Israel and Israeli-held territories, but the three powers differed in the degree of their condemnation.

The State Department, with the authorization of the White House, issued a sharply critical statement which stressed the American view that "further violence cannot bring a durable and stable peace to the Middle East." It said the Israeli action today against Jordanian territory was "damaging to the hopes for a settlement of the real issues involved" and ignored the "peaceful channels" available. It

said the Administration recognized the problems created by terrorism and "we also recognize the disruptive effects of military action."

The statement insisted that Israel and the Arab states "should be adhering scrupulously to the cease-fire resolutions of the Security Council" and should be working with the United Nations special envoy, Dr. Gunnar V. Jarring. The statement revealed that the United States had cautioned Israel and Jordan "as recently as one day ago" against resorting to force and had urged that "differences should be settled through efforts of the United Nations and not through use of force." One official said here that "pressures" were used at the highest levels to restrain Israel from undertaking the operation. An even higher level of influence was exerted, he said, to make Israel break off the attack and withdraw.

The United States, which had sought to halt the Israeli move before it got under way, called on Israel early Thursday to pull back its forces to the cease-fire line. Previously, State Department sources said, Washington had urged Jordan to limit guerrilla actions and had urged Israel to recognize the difficulties of the Hussein regime in imposing restraints.

President Johnson and Secretary of State Rusk were said to be angered by the Israeli action and to have considered it "disproportionate" and a danger to regional peace. The Administration was said to be especially vexed that Israel failed to heed Washington's advice on anti-guerrilla tactics. The "search and destroy" operation which the Israelis pursued, is difficult to criticize publicly here because of its similarity to the measures employed by the U.S. forces in Vietnam.

The British Foreign Office spokesman said that the British Government "deplores all violations of the cease-fire" and insisted that "all concerned" observe the cease-fire agreements. The British press, by and large, took the position that Israel's actions, however unfortunate, were justified. The London Daily Telegraph asserted that had Israel permitted such acts as the mining of a school bus in the Negev to go unpunished, it would "encourage the terrorists."

There was a violent reaction from Moscow. Moscow radio denounced the Israeli action as a "criminal act" and charged that the United States stood behind it. It warned that the action made U.N. efforts to establish peace in the Middle East "meaningless" and denounced it as a "flagrant violation" of the cease-fire agreement and "defiance" of world opinion.

U.S. Calls For Extension of Cease-Fire Observer System to Jordan-Israel Frontier

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y., Mar. 21 (JTA)--The United States, which issued a stinging condemnation of the Israeli action against Jordan called in the Security Council tonight for full Israel and Jordan cooperation with the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in establishing cease-fire observers along the Jordan in posting U.N. observers along the Israeli-Jordan cease-fire lines. The proposal was made as the Security Council met in special session at the request of both Jordan and Israel to hear their charges and countercharges.

Ambassador Arthur J. Goldberg told the Council that the United States viewed the situation with great concern and deplored the terrorism and the military counteraction. He called the recourse to force a peril to the Jarring peace mission. The American representative said that no useful purpose would be served by calumny and name-calling and said the important task was to strengthen the mechanism for peacemaking and the role of the United Nations in the area. The Soviet delegate called the Israeli action a "piratical raid" and said Israel relied on the western powers in "carrying out its aggression."

Ambassador Muhammed El-Farrah, of Jordan, the first speaker, accused Israel of a "criminal attack" and demanded that the Security Council impose sanctions. He warned that delay by the Council would "make the problem more explosive, more dangerous and a greater threat to world peace."

Ambassador Yosef Tekoah of Israel, in his reply, charged Jordan with persistent violation of the cease-fire agreement and failure to prevent its territory from being used as a base for attacks on Israel. The cease-fire line, he said, "has become a line of fire and death." The Israeli envoy told the Council that 37 terrorist acts had been mounted from Jordan territory in recent weeks "and the Jordan Government has not acted to stem these attacks."

The French representative termed the Israeli action "reprehensible" and said it was out of all proportion to the provocation. He said the acts of terrorism were an inevitable consequence of an armed occupation. He called for prompt and full compliance with the Security Council's Nov. 22 resolution and for withdrawal of the Israeli forces.

All the Arab states had been invited to take seats at the Council table along with Jordan and Israel and all were expected to seek the Council floor in the course of the debate. The Council, which was to have met this afternoon to discuss the Rhodesian question, gave priority to the Jordan-Israel dispute and deferred action on the former issue.

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JERUSALEM, Mar. 21 (JTA)--Foreign Minister Eban today instructed Israel's chief delegate to the United Nations to bare the full record of Jordanian-based aggression against Israel during the past weeks as Israel formally requested a meeting of the Security Council on Jordanian violations of last June's cease-fire agreement. The record of incursions from Jordan will disclose the intent of terrorists to inflict casualties against Israel's civilian population.

Synagogue Council Condemns 'Blatant Anti-Semitism' of Polish Regime

NEW YORK, Mar. 21 (JTA)--The Synagogue Council of America, speaking for the Conservative, Orthodox and Reform wings of Judaism in this country, accused the Polish regime today of "blatant anti-Semitism and of the exploitation of traditional hatred of Jews in some segments of the Polish population for their own internal purposes."

The statement, made public by Rabbi Philip Rudin, president of the Council, declared that "no amount of slanderous anti-Zionist rhetoric can hide from the world the moral degradation of a regime that would invoke racial animosity, in a manner reminiscent of Nazi tactics, against a community of 20,000 Jews who represent the pathetic remnant of three million Polish Jews butchered by the Nazis." It called on the Polish leaders for "an immediate end to their outrageous campaign" and appealed to men of goodwill everywhere to support this demand.

The American Jewish Committee, which previously reported an unsatisfactory meeting with Polish Embassy officials in Washington, in a statement today referred to a speech by Wladyslaw Gomułka, head of the United Workers (Communist) Party in Poland on Tuesday, as "an apparent effort" to halt the current anti-Semitic campaign in Poland. The committee said it would continue to demand "cessation of anti-Semitic provocations."

Hundreds of college students and others demonstrated Wednesday afternoon on Fifth Avenue, near the Polish Mission to the United Nations, demanding an end to the anti-Semitic campaign in Poland. The demonstration was organized by the North American Jewish Youth Council and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

Leading South American Newspaper Denounces Communist Anti-Jewish, Anti-Israel Stand

Buenos Aires, Mar. 21 (JTA)--La Prensa, one of South America's greatest newspapers, in an editorial today, denounced the policy of the Communist states for their anti-Israel and anti-Jewish policy which was intensified last June at the time of the Arab-Israeli war, and condemned the current anti-Semitic campaign in Poland as a "totalitarian" manifestation. The newspaper castigated the Soviet Union, the East German Republic, Czechoslovakia and Poland for their policies towards Israel and the Jews. It noted the paradox of these regimes accusing the leaders of Israel of being followers of Hitler when, in fact, the real follower of Hitler, it said, was President Nasser of Egypt whom they supported.

Commenting on the current situation in Poland, La Prensa added: "Only a superficial observer could be surprised by all this since a deeper analysis reveals that totalitarian regimes use this type of campaign against certain sectors of their society."

The Jewish Association of Survivors of Nazi Persecution delivered a memorandum to the Polish Embassy today for transmittal to Warsaw protesting the recourse by "the People's Poland" to the maneuvers practiced in former days by "reactionary governments to conceal their difficulties by raising charges against the Jews. Many of our members, who fought in the Polish Army and other Allied armies to free Poland from the Nazi yoke had believed that once and for all time, the legal extermination of the Jews in the Auschwitz and Treblinka style had been finished. Now we feel betrayed in our hopes," the memorandum declared.

Polish Veterans in Britain Assail Warsaw Regime's Anti-Semitic Campaign

LONDON, Mar. 21 (JTA)--Polish Jewish ex-servicemen who bore arms under the Polish flag in the struggle against Nazi Germany in World War II bitterly denounced the Communist regime in Warsaw last night for its current campaign to blame Poland's small surviving Jewish community for inciting student unrest in that country. At a mass rally held by the Polish Jewish Ex-Servicemen Association here, speaker after speaker, among them representatives of British-Jewish ex-servicemen and a former leader of the Polish underground resistance army, voiced "bitterness" and "disgust" with what they branded a "shameful anti-Semitic campaign." They pointed out the irony of that campaign taking place in the middle of Human Rights Year and on the eve of the 25th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising which the Polish Government itself planned to celebrate.

Rabbi M. Steinberg, a rabbinical court official and former Polish Army chaplain, addressing the rally pointed out that "there are student demonstrations everywhere, east and west, but it took Poland to make Jews the scapegoats for such demonstrations. Many of the students have never seen a Jewish face. But now they are told it was the Jews who brought them out to the streets," he said.

Juzef Gallinski, former Polish underground leader, said he wished to associate himself and his comrades with the protest. He said that those who are conducting the anti-Semitic campaign do not speak for the Polish nation which rejects "such a disgusting campaign."

The rally adopted a resolution denouncing the anti-Jewish campaign as a "Nazi-type propaganda drive against Polish Jews."

Dr. Leon Wohlmann, Swiss Jewish Community Leader and Editor, Dies at 67

ZURICH, Mar. 21 (JTA)--Dr. Leon Wohlmann, well-known Jewish writer and community leader and one of the founders of the Zionist Actions Committee, governing body of the World Zionist Organization, died here today at the age of 67. Dr. Wohlmann was born in Poland and came to Switzerland as a young man. He was a senior member of the staff of the Israelitische Wochenblatt, a Jewish weekly, in which he wrote prolifically on Zionism and on Jewish life.