

Reflections on the causes of the Six Day War:

5 to 11 June 1967

A Talk by

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On the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Six Day War



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On the 5 June 1967 at 8.50 am the Israeli Air Force struck the Egyptian air-force whilst it was on the ground, by pre-emptive strike, and largely destroyed it as an effective fighting force. By the end of the day the air forces of Jordan and Syria had also been destroyed. This was a brilliant strategic and tactical success for the Israel Defence Forces.

It must not be assumed however that what followed was the result of a strategic plan by Israel to acquire territory, or indeed to defeat the combined Arab forces which were aligned against it by 5 June 1967, but was finally a plan to crush the Egyptian armed forces, with the intent of forcing Egypt into negotiations, and getting rid of Nasser. Indeed as I will argue the decision to go to war was only reached by the Government of Israel that had to make the decision, after division within its ranks had been overcome. On 2 June 1967 this happened at a meeting of the Cabinet, the general staff and the Ministerial Defence Committee, held at 9.25 am that day in the Pit, the Headquarters in Tel Aviv of the IDF. It was only a matter of days before the attack that the general staff reached agreement as to the mode of attack, as even they were divided, as to what the strategy should be on the ground. It was only once conflict began that later decisions were taken to attack the West Bank and the Golan Heights. The irony is that it was only after Jordan had been defeated that Defence Minister Dayan was prepared to agree to the assault of the Golan Heights, something to which he had been opposed before the war began. If any country is to be indicted for causing the war, then the indictment, as I hope you will see, must be first be laid against Syria, secondly the USSR, and lastly Egypt. It should be understood, however Nasser did not, want war until the crises that will be described occurred. Egypt, despite representations to Nasser by Field Marshal Amer to the contrary, was unprepared for it, but as a result of Egypt's hubris and the USSR's foreign policy, Egypt provoked the war: and was defeated.

The military forces of Israel, as you all know, are called the Israeli Defence Forces (*ZAHAL*). This at the time of the war was a misnomer. You will see from the slide the opinion of the IDF's former Chief of Staff and the Defence Minister during the war, Moshe Dayan.

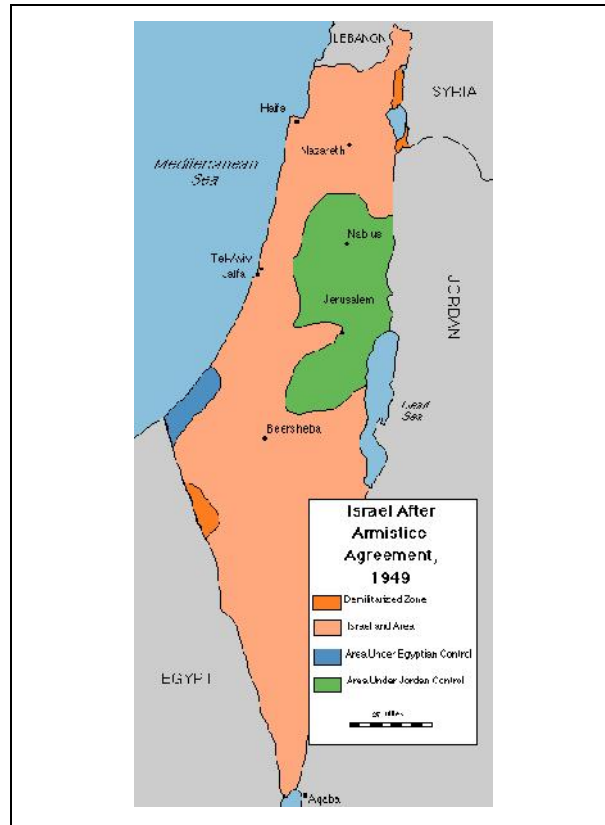
“Although the Israeli army's official title is “the Israeli Defence forces,” it is not a defensive force...the most visual manifestation of the new approach...is the lack of fortifications and fences along the border...simply put, Israeli Defence Forces are an aggressive offensive-minded fighting force. The Israeli military implements this approach in its thinking, planning and *Modus Operandi*. [The offensive values] run in [the military's DNA and [are] inscribed in the marrow of its bones.”

Moshe Dayan April 1967 as cited in G. Laron, *The Six Day War The Breaking of the Middle East* (London: Yale University Press, 2017) p. 275

The geo-political situation that Israel found itself in, thus dictated the strategy and tactics of the military. Nevertheless as Israel was and is an elective democracy there was no dissent from the Chief of Staff or his general staff that the decision to go to war, or indeed to take any action, could only be made by the Government. Nevertheless it was the duty of the Chief of Staff to devise strategy that enabled the politicians to make that decision, unlike most other democracies where policy determines the need for the military to devise a strategy to achieve the political objective. It was the delay in making the decision to go to war, and what should be done once the decision was made, that contributed substantially to the nervous breakdown of the Chief of Staff, Yitzhaq Rabin, for some 36 hours on 23 June 1967. He was burdened by a consciousness of failure because he realised Israel was on the verge of a war the government did not want and the army had not prevented – in fact some historians argue that it had precipitated by its previous actions. Rabin had so much authority that he was regarded as being quasi-ministerial, but his subordination to the political echelon was solid and unshaken. Despite Prime Minister Eshkol's trust in him, the government looked to him for solutions in a crisis that would not precipitate war. Rabin tried to convince ministers that there was nothing to fear from his policy of limited retribution against Syria. His view appeared to be justified until after the events of 7 April 1967 that I will deal with later. His policy was undermined by 19 May 1967 when it appeared that Egypt was preparing to fight Israel. Rabin felt that he had erred in his evaluation and had misled the Government. He now had to appear before them and tell them that the country must prepare for war, and for that purpose Israel must strike first. His assumed failure and other matters I will consider later led additionally to a crisis in government and the military.

The government, due to the speedy turn in events, was left in distress and insisted that Rabin delay until all political avenues had been explored.

By the armistice agreements concluded between Israel and Syria a demilitarised zone was fixed on the border where the Upper Galilee meets the Golan Heights. You will see on the slide that it is in sections before Lake Kinneret. The zones were originally farmed by farmers from both, but became a bone of contention. Both Israel and Syria sought to incorporate the zones within their control. It was the wish of the Israeli General Staff to incorporate the whole of the Golan Heights, and Gaza, for reasons that will become apparent, within Israel for security purposes. Such action, to annexe the Heights or Gaza, was not approved by the Government that wished to maintain the status quo. Realistically since 1956 until the Six Day War the Government understood any attempt to forcibly annexe territory would result in International approbation, leading ultimately to withdrawal. The strategical wishes of members of the General Staff and the Government was to lead to tensions within the Staff and between the Staff and Government.



The Gaza Strip, after 1956, was relatively quiet as Nasser had no desire to give Israel pretext to invade either by war or by punishment of terrorist action. However Nasser did encourage by his patronage the foundation of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), formed in 1964. Nasser appointed Ahmed Shukairy, a lawyer as its head. He was instructed by Nasser to create the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) which was to fight with the Arab Forces, at a time Nasser felt was right to go to war with the intent of destroying Israel. This he did not contemplate to be in 1964, or for many years hence. In 1964 Egypt was heavily involved in the civil war in Yemen, having at its peak, committed up to 70,000 of its forces fighting with the rebels to depose the Emir, who was in turn supported by Saudi Arabia, Britain, the Shah of Iran, and clandestinely, Israel the significance of which will become clear later. The involvement in the Yemen increased Egypt's budgetary expenditure on the military from 7.1% in 1962, to 12.2% in 1964, at a time when Egypt was experiencing severe budgetary difficulties, as were all the non-oil producing states in the region.

Nasser's main problem was feeding his population which was the largest in the region. Egypt's main export was cotton. Nasser had largely lost economic aid from the USA during the 1950's when, as a result of the USA's refusal to supply arms to Egypt, Nasser turned to the USSR which took up the supply and then financed the building of the Aswan Dam, when the USA withdrew support, because Nasser had turned to the USSR.

The USA then employed, under President Kennedy, a rigid foreign aid programme that demanded that exports of wheat would have to be paid for in dollars, that is by the foreign

aid supplied. This policy was more rigorously enforced by President Johnson because of Egyptian involvement in the Yemen in support of USSR policy. Egypt then had to look to the USSR for the supply of grain. The USSR needed cotton. It insisted that supplies of arms and grain should be paid for by the export of Egyptian cotton. USA policy caused Nasser to finally break with the USSR in 1966. This in turn made him increasingly dependent on the USSR. Thus Egypt and Syria became totally dependent upon the USSR for weapons. This enhanced the position of the USSR, which had been seeking deep sea ports in the Mediterranean for its fleet. It was also seeking to align Egypt and Syria with Iraq and Algeria. Thus in its geopolitical view of a super- power world it sought an alliance of Mediterranean states to oppose the dominance of the American sixth fleet and the West's perceived control of the Mediterranean. As a counter-balance this moved the USA more and more to support Israel, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Iran bordering the USSR was more circumspect, generally seeking to play the USSR off against the USA, whilst being vigorously anti-Communist, as were the majority of the Middle Eastern countries that rejected Baathism and socialist policies.

The USA had moved from the position of enforcing an arms embargo against the Middle-Eastern conflict states that had existed since 1950. From the summer of 1956 France had continued to be a major arms supplier to Israel. President Kennedy was concerned about Israel's intentions in building the nuclear reactor supplied by France, suspecting correctly that Israel intended to develop nuclear weapons, something that Israel consistently denied. Ben-Gurion however, was prepared to allow inspection of Dimona in return for the supply of weapons to Israel, and a guarantee from the United States, of Israel's continuing existence. Shimon Peres had already foreseen that the Dimona reactor would act as a deterrent. He also foresaw that it was only a matter of time before missiles were introduced into the Middle East. He therefore sought to bargain Kennedy's concerns for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons against the need for a modern missile defence system to supplement Israel's precarious defence situation. Two inspectors from the USA, after a superficial inspection of the development at Dimona, reported that they could not find any evidence of an intention then to develop nuclear weapons. Kennedy therefore agreed to supply a Hawk missile defence system to Israel that was seen as essential by the IDF to protect Dimona, and was deployed to protect it.

It is important to understand that the building of Dimona was a major contributing factor in Rabin and the general staff developing and agreeing Israel's strategy in the event of a major conflict. The fear was that with the size of the IAF it was of prime importance that the IAF must strike and eliminate the Egyptian Air Force first, before the Egyptian Air Force could strike at Dimona. In understanding this you will understand the importance of the events of May 28 1967 when we come to consider what happened on that day, when the Israeli government was still considering the pursuit of diplomacy, the general staff wanting to strike at Egypt immediately. Thus Israel was prepared to engage in a pre-emptive strike, despite pre-emption being a dubious strategy so far as the law of war is concerned.

Ben-Gurion had resigned as Prime Minister in December 1963 and was succeeded by Levi Eshkol, who had already succeeded him as Minister of Defence. In 1963 President Kennedy had been assassinated and was succeeded by his Vice-President Lyndon Johnson. Eshkol was increasingly reluctant to allow further inspections of Dimona, nor would he give to the United States a guarantee that Israel would not strike first in the event of a threat to Dimona. He also would not promise restraint towards Syria if it proceeded with the diversion scheme of water from the Jordan. Negotiations with the Johnson administration led finally to an agreement on 10 March 1965 whereby, Israel promised not to be the first country to introduce nuclear weapons into the Middle East and the USA committed itself to guaranteeing Israel's integrity, an agreement that both countries breached by the end of 1967.

More importantly, in 1965 President Johnson despatched to Israel Eric Cromer and Averell Harriman to discuss arms sales. This resulted in the USA agreeing to supply to Israel 150 M48 A1 tanks from West Germany. As West Germany was not too happy about supply coming from them, after international criticism to it breaking a non-existent arms embargo, the USA later supplied M48 A2 Pattons direct. By October 1966, Ezer Weitzman had sought from the USA 45 Phantoms and 165 A4 Skyhawk jets. This was declined, but by February 1966 Israel was supplied with 24 A4 Skyhawks. It was the beginning of major arms supplies from the United States to Israel that has continued, Israel now being supplied with F38 Stealth fighter/bombers. This you will see arose from a major security concern for Israel that it should not have nuclear weapons, but Israel's main concern was that it should secure its nuclear reactor at Dimona.

Syria was the other major strategic concern for the Israeli government and the IDF because Syria gave support to Fatah then a competing Palestinian faction to the PLO. Fatah had become particularly active during and after 1965. From that year it was led by Yassir Arafat. From December 1965 Fatah began a series of guerrilla attacks against Israel, 113 by the Six Day War of which 71 were moderately successful, advertised by Fatah as stunning victories. Nevertheless despite Syrian support a tight rein was kept from where Fatah could launch attacks. The attacks were launched from Jordan and/or Lebanon. In May 1966 when Fatah launched a raid from the Golan Heights, a number of its leaders were imprisoned. The attacks became a considerable concern politically within Israel, and a particular concern to the IDF that wanted to strike back hard, but was restrained by the government which did not want to become engaged in a major conflict.

Between 1956 and 1967 Egypt and Syria had formed alliances that had not been lasting. The ill-fated United Arab Republic was ended by Syria because Nasser had sought to dominate the coalition. His brand of Socialism failed, not only because of the strong minority of private entrepreneurs in Syria, but also because of the power of the large minority of Muslim fundamentalists in the country who rejected secularism and particularly communism. Until April 1967 this continued to be a thorn in the side of the ruling Baath party. It was only the military Baathists, when in Government from 1966, as a result of a

military coup led by Saleh Jadid, Hafez al Assad and Muhammed Umran, that was able to crush fundamental opposition. In turn there were power struggles between Jadid and Assad; and between Jadid, Assad and Umran. The latter led a Druse revolt against Jadid and Assad claiming that the Druse officers were being discriminated against. The revolt was crushed. In May 1966 when Assad made a claim to power which failed, Jadid claimed that Israel was about to invade Syria, a claim he repeated in September, when Umran led the Druse revolt. The military was dominated by Shia Alawites that found themselves controlling a Sunni and Druse urban majority. Following the coup, the tie between Syria and Fatah became stronger, but that did not stop a tight rein being kept on Fatah, particularly in the direction from where terrorist raids could be launched. It is ironic that, despite Syria's fear of invasion from Israel, it heightened the tension in the Middle East by encouraging Fatah to carry out the terrorist raids on Israel, but it had more devious games yet to play, directed against Nasser and Egypt.

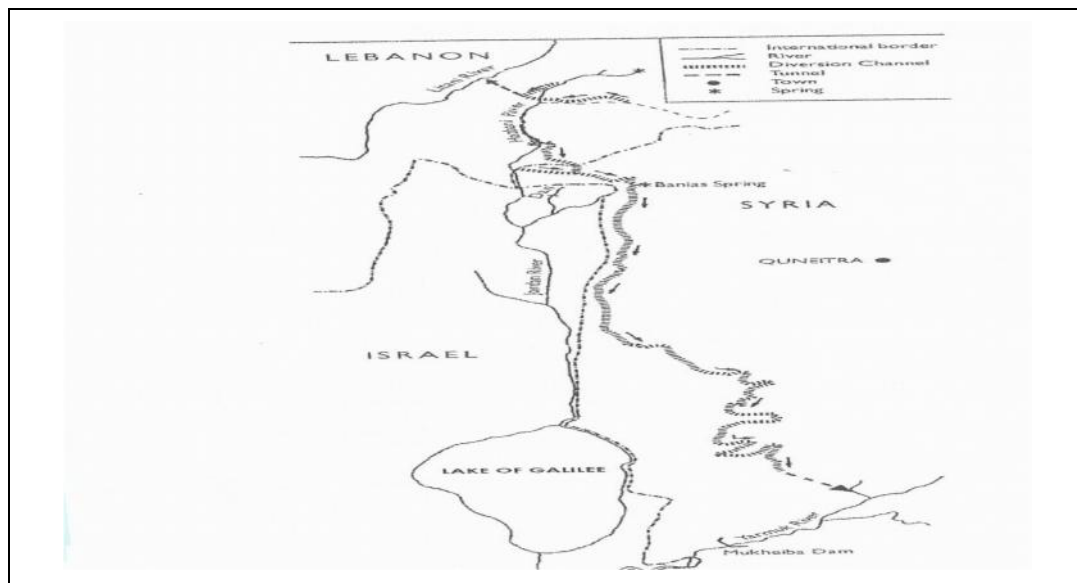
The basic political ideology of the Baath party in Syria was secular and socialist Pan Arabism, an ideology the Syrian Baath party shared with the Baath party in Iraq. Although Nasser believed in Pan-Arabism, he was not Baathist, nor was he secular, being a committed Muslim, but he was a socialist, although not a communist. The intervention of the State in economic and social affairs of course made those countries far more sympathetic to, and attractive to the USSR. Nasser's ambition, however was to be the leader of the pan-Arab world. Syria and Iraq were not prepared to surrender their polity to dominance by Nasser. However, Syria, Iraq and Egypt had the common interest, of not only being supported by the USSR, but being strongly opposed to the continuation of Israel. Iraq theoretically was still in a state of war with Israel, not having entered into armistice agreements with Israel following the 1948 war, as the other neighbouring states had. Consequently it was also understood by Jordan that the entry of Iraqi troops into its territory Israel would regard as a cause of war.

Following the armistice agreement between Syria and Israel there were left two small areas at the bottom of the Golan Heights at the then border, which was known as the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ), shown on the slide. It was a continuous source of friction as farmers from both countries sought to work the area, although it was not particularly suitable for farming. In any event if Israeli farmers sought to bring tractors on the land, then this would frequently lead to shelling from the Syrian artillery positions on the Golan Heights. From 1964 the IDF would respond, and on many occasions sent tractors into the fields to provoke the Syrians, which would lead to frequent counter-artillery fire. This increased the tension as we shall see.

The next area of dispute with Syria was the question of ownership of water from the Jordan River that was a cause of continuing concern to the Eastern Mediterranean countries, including Israel. It was seen by Syria as a means of undermining Israel's existence. In 1953 to minimise the threat Israel attempted to build a small diversion canal near the Syrian border. This resulted in intervention by the USA. President Eisenhower appointed Eric Johnson to secure agreement as to apportionment of the Jordan waters between the contiguous states.

Israel received 38% of the Jordan waters or 450 million cubic metres, an amount that Israel maintained thereafter, despite the conflicts that subsequently arose. Syria received 132 million cubic metres. In 1959 Israel announced that it was to build a National Water Carrier to take water from the Jordan and Lake Galilee for the country. This was completed in 1964/65.

In 1964 Syria announced it intended to divert the Jordan waters, by diverting water from the tributaries, the Wazzani and Hasbani in the Lebanon into the Banias, in Syria, diverting the water to a dam that was to be built in Jordan as shown by the slide.



Syrian propaganda promised the diversion would cripple Israel, which by then it would not have done, as Israel was already experimenting with desalination of sea water. In any event the diversion project would have removed about 200 million cubic metres a year from the Galilee, but would have left 472 million cubic metres a year, in excess of Israel's allowance, under the Johnson plan. Israel had only one tributary to serve the Jordan, being the Dan River but this, together with annual rise in Galilee was sufficient to meet Israel's needs. Nevertheless the threat to the water supply was sufficient to lead to interdiction by artillery and tank fire, to thwart Syrian attempts to divert the water. Lebanon was not interested in Syria's schemes, firstly; because they had no desire to assist Syria, Lebanon then being dominated by a Christian Government and; secondly because Lebanon did not want to antagonise Israel. Although Jordan wanted to build a dam the prime place was only 3 km from the Jordan River, at Mukhayaba. Agreement was reached with Israel to facilitate this. By November 1965 the plans to divert the Jordan were abandoned by Syria. Syria used the conflict over water as a propaganda weapon to embarrass Egypt claiming that Nasser was not prepared to come to Syria's aid whilst being attacked by Israel. Syria made the allegation repeatedly, accusing Nasser of cowardice, to try and provoke Nasser to bring Egypt into conflict with Israel.

Baathism was not supported by the majority of Arab States. Socialism was particularly opposed by Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Iran. This led to hostility within the Arab world that

could only call on one unifying issue; that was the issue of Israel. This did not mean there was not communication between Israel and its neighbouring Arab States. There was; and had been between Jordan and Israel since before the 1948 War of Independence. It continued until a matter of months before the Six Day War. Clandestine conversations took place between Israel and Egypt until at least weeks before the Six Day War, to try and avert war.

Against this background the political situation in Israel had changed dramatically. I have already considered the change in Prime Minister from Ben-Gurion to Eshkol. Unlike Ben-Gurion Eshkol had no objection to bringing Mapam into the Government which included the extreme left-wing faction of Achdut Ha'Avodah to form the Labour Alignment, leaving Ben-Gurion's faction, Rafi, in opposition. Eshkol was still dependent upon the National Religious Party, led by Moshe Shapiro, to maintain a majority in the Knesset. The government was thus split between 'hawks', led by Yigal Allon and Moshe Carmel, who although vocal, were outvoted by the 'doves' led by Moshe Shapiro. This impasse was ultimately to lead to a continuing crisis between May 26 to June 2 1967, in decision-making and between the government and the general staff which was urging a strike against Egypt. It should also be emphasised that the general staff was also split, until late in the day, as to what action should be taken, save for the pre-emptive air strike against the Egyptian Air Force.

Yitzhaq Rabin had been appointed Chief Of staff in 1964. He was a quiet reserved man, not having led any major force in conflict, other than for a short period of time, the Harel Brigade in the conflict for Jerusalem in the War of Independence, and against the Altalena. In 1956 he had been posted abroad, but since had risen through the ranks proving himself to be a brilliant staff officer. Eshkol developed considerable confidence in him as Chief of Staff. His position increasingly involved a political role of holding the balance between an increasingly militant general staff committee and the political elite. His Chiefs of Staff were:

Ezer Weitman: Deputy Chief of Staff, replaced just before the beginning of the Six Day War, and following Rabin's illness, by Chaim Bar-Lev, then chief of Operations but abroad in France at a Staff college.

David Elazar: Officer Commanding the Northern Front.

Uzi Narkiss: Officer Commanding the Eastern Front.

Yehayahu Gavish: Officer Commanding the Southern Front

All of these officers had either been born in Israel or, had since childhood grown up in Israel and had fought in two major wars and been engaged in counter-insurgency operations. All favoured pre-emptive military action against either Syria, Jordan and Egypt but none had contemplated war simultaneously against all three. In fact intelligence indicated, and Rabin advised the government until the events of May 1967, that Egypt was less likely than Syria, to go to war with Israel. If the General Staff was agreed as to a preferable course of action it was, from 1964 to take the Golan Heights from Syria and Gaza from Egypt but this was strongly opposed by the Government for two reasons. Firstly any land taken, they were

strongly of the view, Israel would be forced to give back by the actions of one or both of the super powers and the United Nations. Secondly, the Government did not want the headache of governing the large number of Palestinians in camps in Gaza, or for that matter on the West Bank of the Jordan.

Israel was also faced with a balance of payments crisis during 1965/66 causing the Israeli government to introduce austerity measures, not previously experienced by the population, in fiscal terms, that had been expanding and absorbing immigrants mostly from North Africa and Yemen. The government could do this after winning the election in December 1965. However during the course of 1966 the impact made the government increasingly unpopular. There was net emigration from the country for the first time during that year. Consequently Eshkol's personal popularity plummeted. Fatah's increasing militancy also caused an increasing lack of confidence in his ability as Minister of Defence which he was aware of. This made him even more dependent on the military advice he received from Rabin. This in turn led to the first of misunderstandings that not only affected his trust of the military, but also affected Rabin's confidence of his ability to control his general staff.

The incursions from Jordan by Fatah was placing a strain on the Israeli public and criticism of the IDF for lack of sufficient response. One of the problems was that Jordan was the one border state with which Israel had maintained constant communication since 1948, firstly through the Israel/Jordan Joint Armistice Control Commission (IJAC); secondly through the American Ambassadors in both countries and; thirdly through clandestine contact by Israeli ministers visiting Hussein in Jordan which, until 1966 had built up a relationship of trust. Nevertheless Eshkol agreed a limited retaliatory raid into Jordan, which Rabin organised as a punishment raid on Arab villages, surrounding Hebron, that had aided Fatah. This, the Israelis assumed would result in the villagers then petitioning Hussein to clamp down on Fatah. It would also carry a strong message to Syria. The raid was meant to be just that, Israeli forces to go into the West Bank quickly, demonstrate fire-power, and get out.

Under cover of the IAF, before dawn on November 13 1966 a column of 400 Israeli troops advanced to Rujm al-Madfa, just 10 miles southwest of Hebron, and demolished the police station. They then proceeded to Samu, a village of about 5000 inhabitants which Israel claimed to be a principal staging post for the terrorists. The residents responded to the order to congregate in the town square, whereupon a large number of houses in and around the village were destroyed. At about 7.30 a.m. reconnaissance reported, approximately 100 Jordanian soldiers approaching the village in a convoy of twenty vehicles. Three-quarters of the convoy vehicles were destroyed in ambush, 15 Jordanian soldiers were killed and 54 wounded, but the Jordanians fought back, killing 10 Israelis and their commander, Col. Yoav Shaham. Jordanian Hunter jets were scrambled but were driven off by the IAF, one Jordanian plane being shot down. What had been intended as a swift and surgical strike turned out to be a pitched battle. During the battle 3 Jordanian civilians had been killed and 96 wounded. Whilst the IDF reported about 40 houses destroyed, UN observers reported three times that many.

Israeli politicians were horrified, and so was Rabin, who had been visiting the Northern front during the raid. The aftermath on the West Bank was the opposite than that intended as the Palestinians on the west Bank rioted, seeking the overthrow of Hussein. The Jordanian army remained loyal, but there was concern about the Palestinian officers. Hussein was not deposed, but Samu caused Hussein to break off all contacts with the Israeli government and military, the latter which he suspected correctly, of wanting to seize the West Bank. He also pressed the USA government for the supply of arms that were slow in forthcoming, thus leaving him in a difficult political situation, and vulnerable, as he saw it. He had believed that the USA would control Israeli aggression, thus the USA guarantees for the survival of his regime was also treated with suspicion.

Hussein contemplated allowing Saudi and Iraqi troops into his kingdom to help defend it. He referred to Egypt's failure to come to Jordan's aid as, "the only Arab leader living at peace with Israel". This counter-propaganda against Nasser, who continued to seek to undermine his regime, merely deepened the tension between the two countries, Nasser referring to Hussein as a criminal puppet of the West and a reactionary traitor to the Arab cause.

However when the crisis developed, post April 1967, Hussein realised that war might break out. In that event he believed that he would be at risk of losing his kingdom and his life, if he did nothing. Despite strong representations from Israel to desist, and the continuing hostility with Nasser and advice from the United States Ambassador to stay out of any conflict he concluded that Jordan had to be involved. He had tried to focus Israel's attention on where he thought the blame lay, that being Syria. When rumours spread that Israel was massing forces on Syria's border, he was incredulous as his radar station at Ajlun had picked up no indication of any Israeli build-up of forces in the North. He concluded however, if Israel were to attack Jordan, then neither Syria or Egypt would come to his aid, but even more dangerous was the prospect of Egypt striking first against Israel. If that was repulsed, and Egypt defeated, then Nasser would choose to use Hussein as a scapegoat, for not fighting. That would lead to a revolt in his kingdom, his overthrow and/or death. If Egypt succeeded and Jordan did not participate there would still be a revolution in Jordan to depose him as a coward and/or friend of Israel. His belief was that Egyptian forces would cut across the Negev and head for Amman, or the Palestinian forces would, to reunite Palestine. His other problem was that if he did participate and Egypt lost then Israel was likely to march against him, but this was a risk he was prepared to take because even if Israel did defeat his forces, he and Jordan were likely to survive as Jordan will have participated and fought in a war brought on by Egypt and thus the latter being responsible for the outcome.

Therefore on May 22 1967 he donned military uniform and watched the 40th and 60th Armoured brigades march through Amman to show force without, he hoped having to use it.

He made strong representations to Washington, by Hussein not to pursue a pro-Israeli line. He argued that Israel should attack and open the Straits of Tiran, following which he would play the part of peacemaker. He got no positive response from Washington. Thereafter from

his Arab perspective, and the remainder of the Arab world, the United States continued to follow a pro-Israel line. Hussein therefor saw that Egypt was rapidly gearing for war. His view was he had no alternative but to close ranks with Nasser. He ordered, before the war, the deployment of the 40th Brigade with 100 Patton tanks to cross the Jordan near Jericho, thus violating the limits of the deployment placed on them by the Americans. Hussein then on 30 May 1967 flew to Cairo. There he entered into a mutual defence treaty with Egypt. Nasser imposed strict terms. Hussein agreed to reopen a PLO office in Amman and agreed to place his army under the command of an Egyptian General, Riyad answerable to Field Marshal Amer the Commander of the Egyptian armed forces. Hussein was satisfied as he told the American Ambassador that the problem of the Palestinians had been removed from his shoulders and had been assumed by Nasser who would now carry the blame if things went wrong. On his return to Jordan the reception was tumultuous. Politically he had secured his future, but he did also report to the American Ambassador that, he believed although Egypt would continue to blockade Israel it would not attack. Israel would strike first and then the Egyptians would destroy them. He would not now be blamed for not joining the Arab cause.

Two weeks after the Samu raid the United Arab Command (UAC) ordered movement of its forces in Syria and Egypt to show its strength. This resulted in Israel making known that it was carrying out a trial mobilisation under the name, "Operation Stratum". This acted a rehearsal for May 1967, and a deterrent to any further action by the UAC. Nevertheless this did not prevent Syria increasing terrorist activity between January to April 1967. Rabin gave strict instructions that any reprisal raids were to be carried out against Syria only and limited in scale, the plans first to be approved by the Minister of Defence who continued to be the Prime-Minister.

On 7 April 1967 whilst Rabin was visiting Northern Command, events occurred that would in the view of most historians, ultimately lead to the Six day War, although that was not foreseen, nor planned. The IDF struck at the Syrians from the air which the senior command had been wanting to do for some time. The IAF had been put on warning as work was to be resumed in the Southern Demilitarised Zone, close to Kibbutz Ha-On. It was assumed the Syrians as they usually did would commence artillery fire. Rabin indicated to Eshkol, if that happened the IAF would have to intercede, which Eshkol took calmly. When work commenced the Syrians initially opened up with small arms fire, to which the IDF responded with tank fire. Then there developed an artillery duel, with Syrian shells landing on Kibbutz Tel Katzir. Rabin obtained permission for the use of the Air Force, but only on condition, that shelling of Tel Katzir had not stopped. The shelling did stop, but the Syrians continued to use small arms fire against the tractors. Eshkol gave permission for a sortie against the Syrian positions. The Syrians launched Mig 21 interceptor aircraft against the Israeli assault aircraft and then carried out a massive artillery bombardment which did much damage to Kibbutz Gadot in the Central Demilitarised Zone. Eshkol who was at the IAF control centre on the day agreed that Hod could launch more aircraft. Mirages were launched against the Migs.

Consequently, in 3 separate engagements, 6 Syrian aircraft were downed; two being chased over Jordanian territory and shot down. The Mirages neutralised the Syrian bombardment and also overflew Damascus without loss. The IAF flew 171 sorties that day. Never before had there been such a massive deployment of aircraft, over half the frontline aircraft taking part. The fall out was significant, politically, diplomatically and strategically.

Furthermore when Eshkol realised the scale of what he had authorised, he also realised the action would never have been authorised by his government. It is the view of most that Hod took advantage of the Prime-Minister and acted on his own initiative, in the scale of forces deployed by him. Strategically the importance of what should have been a border incident, had become a large scale aerial conflict, the significance of which was not missed in Moscow. Ami Gluska, a prominent Israeli military historian, sums up the events of 6 April 1967, which were greeted with pride and acclamation by the Israeli media and public, as follows,

“If one can point to a failure of the political, military and Intelligence systems which drove the State of Israel, against its wishes, into the June 1967 war, it was most clearly manifested on 7 April. The IDF took a step that was neither discussed nor approved by the political echelon, nor were its implications analysed accurately either before the event or subsequently. The Intelligence Branch was fixated on its conviction that nothing had changed, and neither the Soviet response nor Nasser’s moves were anticipated or evaluated correctly.”

Indeed Major General Yariv, as head of the Intelligence Branch, until the outbreak of war was reporting that Egypt would not take the actions it did, contrary to the views of Moshe Dayan that the actions of 7 April 1967 would lead to war. On 9 April 1967 there were two further terrorist actions at Margaliyot and Maayan. The action did nothing to deter Syria or Fatah.

The Syrian/Egypt mutual defence pact provided that armed aggression against one, was considered armed aggression against the other. Therefore Nasser spent a considerable period of time until April 1967 trying to restrain the Syrians, whilst the Syrians spent a considerable amount of propaganda berating Egypt for not coming to its aid. Because of the involvement of Egyptian troops in Yemen and the general state of Arab forces, Nasser told Hussein that he did not think that the Arab armies would be in a fit state to fight the Israelis for at least 4 years.

The USSR, pursuing its world view, and particularly its geopolitical desire to wrest influence from the USA in the Middle East was encouraging and supporting Egypt in the Yemen and against Saudi Arabia, but found itself in some difficulty over Iranian support for the reactionary Gulf States. Iran was playing Israel and the Soviet Union against the other, but Israel had to be very cautious about its relations with Iran, as at the time Israel was almost entirely dependent upon Iran for its oil. Rabin visited Iran in April 1967. Israel was encouraged by the Shah to continue to support the Emir in Yemen. At the same time the

Shah was encouraging the USSR to persuade Nasser to withdraw troops from the Yemen, to face the Israeli threat that was being posed to Syria and Jordan. The one great fear that was shared by the USSR and the USA was that the unstable conflict in the region would bring them into conflict.

Nasser was conflicted concerning the influence of the USSR. He could not allow the USSR to become too powerful in Egypt, bearing in mind his ostensible leadership of the non-aligned states, and the fear of internal unrest that would be provoked by the Muslim brotherhood. This was a problem for Syria too, but both were heavily dependent on aid from USSR and particularly armaments. Indeed both countries were also particularly dependent on Soviet intelligence.

Following the events of 7 April 1967, and statements made by Eshkol and Yariv, (attributed wrongly by them to Rabin) as to retaliation if terrorist raids continued, the USSR became convinced that Israel intended an imminent attack on Syria. On 9 or 12 May 1967 the USSR received information of a large scale build-up of Israeli forces on its Northern/Syrian border, the report that I have said before Hussein found incredulous.

For those who believe in conspiracy theories this information could have been implanted by an Israeli double agent, Victor Grayevsky. He was an immigrant from Poland, and a known communist. He had acted on behalf of Israeli intelligence for many years. Guy Laron in "The Six Day War, The Breaking of the Middle East" advances the argument that he may have been the source on May 12 1967 that gave the USSR the intelligence of the intention to invade Syria, but accepts that Grayevsky never admitted that he was the source. If he was, it is possible that the Israeli intent may have been the hope that the Russians would then dissuade the Syrians from further terrorist activity. The Israeli government would not have sanctioned such intelligence activity otherwise, for fear of provoking exactly what happened.

It is necessary to consider the reasoning of the Israeli government, not the military, in the years leading to the war. The Government would not have viewed any political advantage from a territorial war. Ever since the forced withdrawal from Sinai after the 1956 war, the government had opposed the military's ambition to seize territory, knowing that International pressure would force Israel to give it up. Indeed Ben-Gurion had become firmly entrenched against territorial expansion, something the Eshkol government continued to support, although more divided. Economically Israel had been, like the remainder of the world, from 1964 Onwards, suffering from the International monetary crisis. It was an economy still largely dependent upon agriculture, thus imports of luxury goods and expenditure on arming the IDF had become an increasing burden, causing the Eshkol government to impose an austerity budget following the December 1965 election. This had severely reduced Eshkol's popularity which was at a very low point by the beginning of 1967. His popularity had been further weakened by the increasing terrorist activity and, the reluctance of the government, in the public view, to adequately retaliate save for the Samu raid. Consequently both the public and the military were losing faith in Eshkol continuing to

hold the defence portfolio, as well as Prime-Minister. This was to lead to a political crisis just before the war began that I will consider because it was a contributory factor in the decision-making as to the conduct of the war.

However the Government and the IDF were not ignoring the increased terrorist activity. On 7 May 1967, the Ministerial Committee on Security met to discuss the Syrian involvement, a meeting that would not have been ignored by the Arab world and, particularly the USSR. On 9 May 1967, during the Parliamentary recess, the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Security Committee met, which Eshkol and Rabin attended. Eshkol gave evidence to the Committee that, "we all admit that the day of retribution must arrive" against Syria. On 11 May 1967 Aharon Yariv was reported by UPI, saying that the IDF will take steps "to overthrow the regime in Syria". His observation, if accurately reported, was not sanctioned by the government. Indeed Rabin had previously been reprimanded by Eshkol for observations in the same vein. It was Yariv's comment that was wrongly attributed to Rabin by the USSR Ambassador.

On the 12 May 1967 General Murtaji, the Commander of the Egyptian Sinai front in the war, in his account, alleged that Rabin had said that Israel would launch a lightning attack on Syria, occupy Damascus and overthrow the Syrian government. It appears that after the 12 May 1967 the USSR was engaged in a deliberate war of disinformation, blaming the CIA for promoting the Israeli escalation, as well as other reactionary forces. On 13 May 1967 information was passed to Nasser that, 15 Israeli brigades were massed on the Syrian border. This was partly corroborated by Anwar Sadat, who was then in Moscow, on a mission to acquire arms. He reported being told by Semonov, the Speaker of the Russian Parliament, that 10 Israeli Brigades were massed on the Syrian border.

The strategy is not hard to determine. That is, as a consequence of the Syrian/Egyptian mutual defence pact, if the threat to Syria presented as real, Nasser would be forced to act, by entering Sinai to pose a threat to Israel. It has to be understood, that by doing so, this was not meant by Soviet strategy to bring on a war, but primarily to deter Israel from attacking Syria, due to the threat to Israel on its Southern border. Thus it was thought having to divert forces from the North of Israel to the South. The USSR whether it believed its information, or not was not contemplating that Israel would mobilise as a result of the Egyptian threat.

When Eshkol heard of the USSR's intelligence he invited Russian Ambassador Chuvakhin to visit the Northern front. He was met with the response from him, that it was the duty of an Ambassador, "to report on his country's instructions, information, not to have to go and check on its truth". What the Soviet Union had not considered strategically, was the importance to Israel of Dimona. Any Egyptian re-occupation of Sinai presented a threat to that establishment, as well as directly to Israel. More importantly it raised tension as to what action the Egyptian Airforce might take pre-emptively against Dimona. Furthermore, what they must have known and bargained for was, that Israel could not for an indefinite period of time stay on a war footing if it did mobilise, without entering into negotiations.

These would lead, by their world view, into concessions by Israel, enhancing the position of the USSR in the eyes of the Arab world. What they had not considered, contrary to the views of the USA, British and French military, was that Israel would through economic and military necessity go to war, and if there was war, win.

Israel had scheduled, from 1966, despite widespread international objection, and from Ben-Gurion, for the first time, its annual Yom Ha'Atzmaut military parade in West Jerusalem for the 15 May 1967. Such a parade by International opinion and that of Ben-Gurion was viewed as a provocation.

Egypt started to move troops into Sinai on 14 May, news of which was passed to Eshkol and Rabin at the parade. By then because of Russian and Egyptian propaganda as to a potential great Arab victory to throw the Zionists into the sea, tension was high in Israel. The Egyptian action added to it, an action that was gradually reinforced. However the Intelligence gained by the IDF and the CIA was that the deployment of troops was initially, and continued to be, on the defensive.

However on the 17 May 1967 Egyptian Migs overflew Dimona, penetrating Israeli airspace and were not intercepted by the IAF. This caused major military alarm, as did the increasing build-up of forces in Southern Sinai, posing a potential threat to Eilat and Dimona. Nasser's intention, in the event of conflict, he later wrote, was to recover the whole of the Gulf of Aqaba, cutting off Eilat from Israel.

The build up to war was increased by Egypt. On the 18 May 1967 Nasser requested the withdrawal of UNEF forces from Sinai. This presented U-Thant, the Secretary General of the United Nations and General Odd Bull the American Commander of UNEF, with a problem. Legally UNEF could only remain on Egyptian soil with the permission of the Egyptian government (Nasser), and thus, as U-Thant argued correctly, with the withdrawal of consent, there was no option, despite strong USA and Israel objections, but to comply, which U Thant and Odd Bull did. Significantly UNEF gave up control of the Straits of Tiran which Egyptian forces then occupied. On 21 May 1967, Nasser ordered that the Straits of Tiran were to be closed to all Israeli shipping. This he understood, and had known since 1956, Israel considered to be a *casus belli*, (cause of war).

On 26 May 1967 Nasser addressed the Trade Union Confederation in Cairo to rapturous applause. There was no doubt by this date that the Arab world considered that Arab forces were at last going to destroy Israel, and that the Palestinian refugees were going to recover Palestine. Read the slide below carefully.

He does not say there is going to be war, but "if we are attacked". Nevertheless such documents that have become available, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, reveal that Nasser contemplated a pre-emptive strike against Israel on 27 May 1967, only to be dissuaded from doing so by the Soviet Union, particularly Mr Gromyko.

“The Arab world to-day is different from the Arab world of ten days ago, and the same is true of Israel. The Arabs are firmly resolved to realise their rights and they will restore the rights of the Arabs of Palestine. We are confident of victory over Israel...the blocking of the Straits means entering into an all-out battle with Israel. This requires preparations. When we felt ourselves to be ready, we did this...If we are attacked, it will be war and our fundamental objective will be the destruction of Israel.”

What Nasser said to the Trade Union Confederation in Cairo
(26 May 1967)

This was because firstly; the Soviet Union did not want a war and; secondly they were concerned at what the USA might do, bearing in mind the diplomatic moves that were then being made by Eban which I will refer to. Indeed Nasser was stoking up the Arab population, based on information received from Field Marshal Amer, that his forces would win a stunning victory. The truth was that the Egyptian forces in Sinai were largely in disarray because, between 23 May and 5 June 1967 it had been unclear to them whether they were meant to be on the offensive or defensive. That is why Amer was considerably relieved when Nasser called off his proposed pre-emptive strike on 27 May 1967. Furthermore Amer was informed by his field commanders that the forces in Sinai had not been trained for offensive action, but had been trained for defensive action. There had been no training in Sinai since 1956 which had been demilitarised. Against this all the Israeli divisional commanders had fought in 1948 and 1956 and had been thoroughly schooled as an offensive force. Nasser and Amer were faced strategically with three options following the deployment in Sinai, firstly; a pre-emptive strike against Israel; continue to escalate the situation and force Israel to strike first or; de-escalate and lose face in the Arab world. The second option was chosen for them by Israel. Nasser had approved a limited action, Operation Lion which was the plan to cut off Eilat and part of the Negev including Dimona by counter-offensive, which if successful, could be expanded to an attack on Israel proper from the South and East, by Jordan.

It is important now to consider what was happening in Israel. From the 19 May 1967 Israel mobilised, to counter the steps taken by Egypt. The first call-up mobilised 80,000 reserves. This had a devastating impact on Israeli economic and social activity. It also had an enormous emotional impact on Jewry internationally. Within Israel, women and those too old or young to be mobilised as frontline troops, or as service personnel, were engaged in building bomb protection and also digging graves. Volunteers from around the world were being flown in by El Al to replace male workers conscripted. There was an enormous fear of what war might bring in casualties, both civilian and military and property devastation. Within the political establishment there was primarily concern as to how war might be averted. The government was split between ‘hawks’ and ‘doves’ as to what action should be taken. Initially it was the doves led by Eshkol that dominated. Following the closure

of the Straits of Tiran Abba Eban lobbied to be sent on a diplomatic mission. He was despatched on 23rd May 1967, first to Europe.

When visiting De-Gaulle in France all that was gained was a warning that it must not be Israel that took pre-emptive action, a step that would sour severely relations between France and Israel. A positive response was received from Britain. Prime Minister Harold Wilson posited the idea of an international armada to travel through the Straits of Tiran. The British cabinet was however split between the pro-Zionists led by the Prime Minister and Richard Crossman, and the Anti-Zionists led by the Foreign Minister George Brown and Richard Mayhew. At first President Johnson and Dean Rusk for the United States were prepared to entertain the idea. Johnson was very much a pro-Zionist as was his aide Walt Rostow a Jew. Support was voiced by Scandinavian countries, but as time passed nothing happened. The idea, in both the USA and Britain, was killed off by their military advisers who pointed out what might happen if the ships were fired on, whilst escorted by their respective navies, which would then retaliate. That could result in the West being drawn in to a conflagration with dire consequences. Johnson developed a mantra, telling Eban that, "Israel would not be alone unless it decides to go it alone", which Eban misinterpreted as meaning that Israel would not be alone. Johnson had been repeatedly advised by the military and the CIA that, in any event, their view was that Israel would win a comprehensive victory against the Arabs. Indeed Robert MacNamara told Eban on 26 May that the view of the Chiefs of Staffs and CIA was that the Egyptian forces were deployed on the defensive. This was still being confirmed by Yariv to Rabin and the Israeli military. By 28th May 1967 Eban had returned empty-handed, but was obfuscating as to whether his diplomacy had succeeded, suggesting that there would be an armada of ships to sail through the straits. He advocated a further delay of up to three weeks to give time for diplomacy to succeed. This added to the tension and nearly caused a cabinet and military crisis. It did result in Eshkol sending Meir Amit the head of Mossad to Washington, as a result of information received from the Embassy there. Clarification was required as to the views of the United States to Israel unilaterally taking action. By June 1st it had been clarified that Johnson's alleged commitment to an armada was not as strong as Eban had described. The President could give no guarantees as to an armada, nor military support to Israel. Amit clarified that the White House and CIA expected that Israel was likely to take action. When Amit asked if that was approval or disapproval, there was silence, which Amit and a dumbfounded Eshkol and Rabin understood as being a green light. They realised they had been misled by Eban or he had misunderstood what President Johnson was seeking to convey to Israel. There was an understanding of Israel's position by the USA, the relationship would not be impinged if Israel did now act alone.

On the 28 May, before Eshkol decided to broadcast to the Nation, the cabinet decided, before Amit's report and despite opposition from a vociferous minority led by Allon, to delay a further three weeks for further diplomacy to take place. Eban confidently advised that Israel would not be alone.

Eshkol's broadcast on Israel National radio was a poor performance. He was, in part, probably as a result of tension, incoherent and failed to follow his script. He also spoke of the need for further diplomacy. The media the following day was condemning of his performance, asking the question whether he should continue as Defence Minister. There was a clamour for Dayan to be brought back, but not necessarily as Defence Minister.

It was not only Eshkol that was suffering from the tension. Rabin had been trying to hold the balance between the wishes of the politicians to pursue diplomacy and that of his general staff who were

anxious to strike. Additionally, there was disagreement amongst the Staff, as to where to strike, the dispute coming to a head on May 22 1967. Rabin favoured a limited offensive to destroy the Egyptian Airforce and seize Gaza, (*codename Atzmon*), as well as seizing the Golan Heights (*Schlieffen Plan*). His intention then was to trade off Gaza against the opening of the Straits of Tiran. The remainder, led by Gavish and Weitzman, wished for a major offensive to destroy the Egyptian forces (*Kardom*). All these plans had been conceived and drawn under Rabin's direction and Chairmanship. Neither plans affecting Sinai favoured the permanent acquisition of land. Before this meeting Rabin had attended at the Cabinet in the morning. He tried to persuade the cabinet to change its position, but the meeting had been dominated by Moshe Shapiro, the arch dove, and leader of the National Religious Party. After the meeting Shapiro had berated Rabin. Rabin then had two further meetings that day. The first when he was summonsed to Sde Boker to meet with Ben-Gurion, who again berated him for having put Israel in a position where Israel should have to go to war, without support. He surmised that thousands of lives would be lost, which Rabin, in any event, greatly feared. Rabin had wanted to discuss his plans with Ben-Gurion but left. He then met with Moshe Dayan who offered him no support or advice in the position he considered himself to be in, nor did he support *Atzmon*, as contrary to Ben-Gurion, Dayan thought that the IDF was actually powerful enough to destroy the Egyptian Army, as it had done in 1956, but then with help. By this time, with the permission of Eshkol and Rabin, Dayan had toured the Southern Front and talked to the front commanders. His lack of empathy or understanding, severely depressed Rabin, who succumbed by the end of the day too tiredness and nicotine poisoning. He was put to sleep for 36 hours by the chief medical officer, having suffered a severe anxiety attack. Before treatment Rabin summonsed Ezer Weitzman, offered to resign as Chief of Staff, and pass command to Weitzman. Weitzman told him not to be hasty, but Weitzman the following day convened the general staff, informed them that he was now the acting Chief of Staff. He cancelled the plans for '*Atzmon*'. They all agreed that Rabin had been too cautious and had given the government the wrong message about potential casualties. They wanted to meet with the government and thought with Weitzman they had their chance. Hod particularly was optimistic and believed that '*Moked*' would succeed. Weitzman however had over-estimated his power. He instructed the general staff to prepare for battle on 25 May 1967, with the intention of presenting their plans to Eshkol later that day. He had devised a plan called '*Axe 2*'. This incorporated all the previous plans but envisaged the IDF capturing the whole of Sinai. To implement the plan it was necessary to move two of the divisions already at their starting points in Sinai, overnight on 24/25 May 1967, to different starting positions in Sinai, a manoeuvre moving thousands of men and vehicles. The Divisional Commanders, when the order to attack did not materialise were not happy, when the command came later, to return their troops to their previous positions.

Eshkol refused to attend the proposed meeting as Eban had left on his diplomatic mission on 24 May, leaving Gavish and 2 of his divisional commanders livid. The Generals therefore lost confidence in Weitzman as being able to manage the government and being able to read the political view, as Rabin had managed for the previous three years, understanding the political implications of events.

On the 25 May 1967 Rabin, having recovered sufficiently, returned to command. After discovering what Weitzman had done, with Eshkol's consent, recalled Haim Bar-Lev from Paris and appointed him Deputy Chief of Staff, moving Weitzman to Chief of Operations branch.

Rabin no longer felt isolated, and was able to cease vacillating between the government and general staff, re-assuming the unequivocal position of spokesman for the IDF. From 25 May 1967 he was able to concentrate solely on the military's perspective of the situation, presenting this to the government, with Bar-Lev co-ordinating the tactical arguments of the military staff. This did not diminish Rabin's position, nor the fact that for the previous eight years he had been Chief of Operations, Deputy Chief of Staff and Chief of Staff. He, without doubt, was responsible for the battle-readiness of the IDF, its equipment; and was thus responsible for the resulting victory. It was he that Eshkol, as Defence Minister, relied on and consulted from the end of 1963; and to whom the politicians as well as the population admired and respected, accepting his view on strategy and tactics.

Weitzman finally destroyed his position on June 1. As Moshe Dayan was making his way to the Prime-Minister's office to be sworn in as Minister for Defence. Weitzman stormed into the Prime Minister's office demanding to be reappointed as deputy Chief of Staff, falsely telling Eshkol that Bar-Lev was not popular with the commanders, and accusing Eshkol of putting the State of Israel at risk, he being responsible for the possible destruction of Israel and the casualties that would follow, by his continuing delay. Weitzman thereafter was side-lined by both the political elite and the military until the end of the war.

On May 30 1967 at a meeting of Mapai, 2 days following Eshkol's broadcast, the party members, as a result of media and alleged popular demand, forced Eshkol to concede the Defence portfolio, demanding that it be given to Moshe Dayan. This resulted in Rafi being brought into the coalition, rapidly followed by Gachal, led by Menachim Begin, who became a Minister without Portfolio. Begin had in fact sounded out, days before, Ben-Gurion, as to whether he would return as Prime-Minister, but the latter was not in favour of a general war which of course Begin was, seeking from the war, the advantage of gaining territory for a greater Israel.

These political events solved problems that had arisen amongst the general staff that had favoured Yigal Allon becoming Minister of Defence. Allon was the leading hawk in the Cabinet and a former commander in the Palmach, to which all, apart from Weitzman, had belonged, or served under him in the IDF. Dayan had sought the position of Commander of the Southern front which would have displaced Gavish, causing another crisis as Gavish was not prepared to stand aside, but that was avoided by Rafi joining the Government and Dayan becoming Defence Minister. Following his tour of the Southern front at the end of May he was made aware of the war plans and had approved of them.

The die was now cast. Eshkol with his Cabinet, at Rabin's request, agreed to meet with the Chief of Staff's Committee at the Pit in the morning of June 2 1967; when the war plans were outlined to them. By then, through the influence of Bar-Lev and Dayan, 'Atzmon' had been shelved, and Rabin's original plan for the destruction of the Egyptian Airforce by pre-emptive strike and its army in Sinai, were approved, with the strike to take place at 8.50 a.m. on the morning of June 5 1967.

The Six day War was the result of a series of political miscalculations. The IDF believed that the main threat to Israel's security was Syria through terrorist raids emanating from Jordan. The strategy was to punish Jordan, and thus use Jordan to stop the raids. Additionally to provoke Syria which would enable the IDF to strike back firmly and seize the Golan Heights. This was a miscalculation so far as the government were concerned as it had not territorial ambitions or the wish to provoke a war. The

Government miscalculated as to the effect of limited punishment raids, failing properly to understand the degree of commitment of Fatah. Both the government and the IDF miscalculated the risks presented to King Hussein and Jordan by the policy of retaliation, and what Hussein would do in the event of a likelihood of war between Israel and the Arab states, thus jeopardising the closest and most useful relations that Israel had with one of its neighbours. Ironically Syria got the war against Israel it wanted, to be fought by everyone else first, and nearly escaped any combat at all, save for shelling the Galilee, as it had done when there was no war. Dayan was reluctant to expand the war to seize the Golan Heights until the success achieved on the Southern and Eastern fronts, as you may find out in the presentation about the war. However Syria never expected a war to take the course it did and, by June 8th 1967, it was left to face the IDF alone. Major General David Elazar's ambition to seize the Golan Heights was fulfilled. King Hussein of Jordan gained politically. He kept his kingdom but lost the 40th and 60th Armoured Brigades, the West Bank and; most importantly, so far as Israel and the Jewish world was concerned, East Jerusalem. His analysis of his and Jordan's situation, should war occur, was almost spot-on.

The USSR's analysis of what should have happened, in respect of their political and military strategy, ignored socio/economic demands placed on Israel by the Egyptian occupation of Sinai, and the military threat Israel perceived if faced on three fronts. Israel could not sustain, beyond a very limited period of time, mobilisation of its reserves. Israel also could not risk being struck first, the concerns of the IDF being the defence of Dimona, and the necessity to disable the enemy air forces to neutralise the disadvantage it faced in numbers. Israel gained vast swathes of territory that its plans, save for the West Bank had not provided for. Indeed Dayan tried to stop Tal and Sharon's forces going to the East Bank of the Suez Canal, but they were already there, when he gave the command not to go there. Israel did take Sharm el Sheik, and opened the Straits of Tiran, that have not been closed since to Israel. The predictions of the military and intelligence in the USA and Britain proved correct. Israel achieved a victory that stunned the Arab and wider world with political, military and economic consequences that resound to-day, but that is history.