

Rover which enabled me to get a first hand impression of the situation in PORT SAID and the fighting. The Egyptian Garrison had consisted of three regular battalions supported by Russian self-propelled anti-tank guns (SU 100's) and a considerable number of anti-aircraft guns which had been used in a ground role after the parachute drop. The Garrison had been swollen by a last minute influx from SINAI and there were some 4,500 Egyptian regular troops in the area. Arms and ammunition, mainly of Soviet manufacture, had been supplied on a lavish scale and there had been a widespread distribution to civilians of all ages. The scale of this can be judged from the fact that on 8th November 45 Commando recovered fifty-seven 3-ton truck loads of arms and ammunition from the area round ARAB TOWN. This material was mainly surrendered by Egyptians in civilian clothes.

British casualties had amounted to 16 killed and 96 wounded, while the French had had 10 killed and 33 wounded. The value of helicopters for evacuating the wounded to the aircraft carriers was amply demonstrated. The French had converted a large liner as a hospital ship.

The Egyptian casualties were much more difficult to assess at the time since the civilian administration had broken down and no records of dead or wounded were available. Neither was it possible to distinguish between military casualties who had abandoned their uniforms, and civilians, who were killed or wounded with arms in their hands.

The damage to property was mainly confined to buildings along the sea front, the burnt out portion of shanty town, the block near the Governorate and NAVY HOUSE, both of which had been attacked from the air with rockets. Damage to the main town was remarkably slight.

The subject of Egyptian casualties and damage to property has since been thoroughly investigated, first by Sir Walter MONCKTON and then by Sir Edwin HERBERT, whose findings have been published in a Government White Paper.

The situation in PORT SAID on November 8th was then as follows:—

Tactical Headquarters of the Joint Task Force was in HMS TYNE moored alongside the Western breakwater. 3 Commando Brigade together with 6 Royal Tank Regiment and 3 Field Squadron RE were engaged in clearing up the Northern part of the town. PORT FUAD was occupied by the French. One battalion of 16 Parachute Brigade was on GAMIL Airfield, the French Parachute battalion round the water works, and a British Parachute battalion with a French element was at EL CAP. During the day a clash took place here, either because the local Egyptian troops were unaware of the Cease Fire or as an act of deliberate provocation.

From now onwards great efforts were made to restore the administration of PORT SAID to normal. The Egyptian administration was bolstered up by our Civil Affairs Officers, food distribution was organised, public utilities such as sewage and electric light were quickly repaired and the streets cleaned up. Fortunately the water works were intact, but a careful watch was kept on the level of the SWEET-WATER CANAL in case the Egyptian Army

chose to restrict the flow of water to PORT SAID. Arrangements were also made to accept a hospital train from CAIRO whose despatch was organised through United Nations channels.

High priority was given to salvage operations and teams immediately started to inspect the wrecks sunk by the Egyptians. There were 21 of these in the harbour, far more than air photographs had disclosed since many of them were completely submerged. Blocking of the harbour had been catered for in the planning and two salvage ships, an ocean tug and four harbour tugs together with the necessary Clearance Diving Teams and HMS DALRYMPLE (wreck dispersal and survey vessel) had been included in the assault convoy. The two salvage vessels entered harbour on 7th November and by the 9th November a channel had been marked through the blockships. Further salvage vessels continued to arrive over the next week, but it was not until 12th November that the first LST was able to pass through the blockships and berth in the inner harbour. Search for obstructions was extended down to EL CAP while considerable progress was made in actual salvage work and a base was established on shore by the time the main salvage force arrived.

On 9th November I was instructed that the policy of Her Majesty's Government and the French Government was to retain our hold in PORT SAID until the United Nations Force was established there and that we should do so in sufficient strength to insure against a breach of the Cease Fire.

The Allied Forces were to be redeployed as follows:—

Naval Forces

Two British and one French Carrier to remain on station in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Ships for picket duties were to take station off CYPRUS.

CYPRUS

A minesweeping force, salvage and clearance ships would remain until the CANAL and its approaches were clear, a RED SEA element being based on ADEN.

Land Forces

In PORT SAID the build-up of 3 Infantry Division, less 1 Guards Brigade, was to be continued until completed.

The French were to provide the equivalent of the one Brigade Group in PORT FUAD.

16 Parachute Brigade to be withdrawn to the UNITED KINGDOM, less one battalion group in CYPRUS.

3 Commando Brigade was to return to MALTA.

3 Infantry Brigade from MALTA and 1 Guards Brigade from the UNITED KINGDOM to reinforce CYPRUS.

Air Forces

Of the bomber force previously available 20 Valiants and 24 Canberras were to be held in the UNITED KINGDOM at varying degrees of readiness. All shore based aircraft in the Mediterranean were to remain in position.