

SIX DAY WAR

Arab Preparations Before the Six-Day War

Before the Six-Day War, Egypt, Syria, and Jordan showed military readiness and unity against Israel. Their leaders used strong rhetoric and massed troops along Israel's borders. Driven by pan-Arab nationalism and political tensions, they aimed to present a serious military threat—though their actual readiness and coordination were weaker than many believed.

Egypt

- **Actions:** Under President Gamal Abdel Nasser, Egypt escalated tensions by demanding the withdrawal of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) from the Sinai Peninsula. It deployed about 130,000–160,000 troops and 900 tanks near Israel's border and blocked Israeli shipping through the Straits of Tiran. Israel considered this blockade an act of war.
- **Intent:** Nasser wanted to boost his prestige in the Arab world. However, the mobilization grew beyond his control, and some intelligence reports suggested he was looking for a way to avoid a full invasion without losing face.

Syria

- **Actions:** Syria supported Palestinian guerrilla attacks and shelled Israeli settlements from the Golan Heights before the war. In May 1967, after a false Soviet warning of an Israeli attack, Syria activated its defense pact with Egypt and stationed about 50,000 troops on the Golan Heights.
- **Intent:** Syria's moves were driven by disputes over water from the Sea of Galilee and political rivalry. These actions added to regional tensions and helped unite Arab nations against Israel.

Jordan

- **Actions:** King Hussein of Jordan was initially reluctant to fight but feared isolation and possible Israeli attack if he stayed neutral. On May 30, just days before the war, Jordan signed a defense pact with Egypt. It deployed about 55,000 soldiers and 270 tanks in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and allowed Iraqi troops to enter its territory.
- **Intent:** Jordan's main goal was to secure Arab support and maintain control of the West Bank. Its military plan focused on tying down Israeli forces rather than launching a major offensive.

Outcome

The combined Arab military buildup and hostile rhetoric created a deep sense of threat in Israel. This led Israel to launch a preemptive strike on 5 June 1967, starting the Six-Day War.

MAP SUMMARIES

Six-Day War: Before the war

From 1948 to 1967, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, was ruled by Jordan. During this period, the Gaza Strip was under Egyptian military administration. Israeli troops captured Egypt's Sinai peninsula during the 1956 British, French and Israeli military campaign in response to the nationalisation of the Suez Canal. The Israelis subsequently withdrew and were replaced with a UN force. In 1967, Egypt ordered the UN troops out and blocked Israeli shipping routes - adding to already high levels of tension between Israel and its neighbours.



Six-Day War: After the war

In a pre-emptive attack on Egypt that drew Syria and Jordan into a regional war in 1967, Israel made massive territorial gains capturing the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula up to the Suez Canal. The principle of land-for-peace that has formed the basis of Arab-Israeli negotiations is based on Israel giving up land won in the 1967 war in return for peace deals recognising Israeli borders and its right to security. The Sinai Peninsula was returned to Egypt as part of the 1979 peace deal with Israel.

