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By GENE CURRIVANSpecial to THE NEW YORK TIMES.
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TEL AVIV, Israel, May 23—Throughout the Holy Land it appeared tonight that both sides were fighting desperately to hold or improve their positions before any cease-fire order became effective.

The Arab Legion increased pressure on Jerusalem, and from dug-in positions at surrounding Arab villages poured more shells into the city, the Haganah reported.

Israeli aircraft made several night attacks on Arab concentrations from which Israeli positions on Mount Zion were being shelled. The Haganah claimed several direct hits.

Just south of Jerusalem and near Arab-held Bethlehem, Arab forces launched a serious attack against Ramat Rahel and reached the settlement's boundaries. The Haganah reported that the attack had been repulsed and that ten Arabs and twelve of its own men had been killed.

Along the coast the Haganah said it had captured the police station at Ras el Naqura on the Lebanese border as well as Tantura, fifteen miles south of Haifa. Tantura, according to the Haganah, had been used as a smuggling point for recruits brought by sea from Egypt. "Hundreds of Arabs and a large quantity of booty fell into our hands," the communiqué said.

[This action, according to The Associated Press, cleared for Israel the vital Palestine coastal road from the Lebanese border to Tel Aviv, seventy-five miles to the south.]

On the northern front, Israeli aircraft for the fourth successive night attacked Arab installations near Samakh, south of the sea of Galilee. Other concentrations to the east of Lubya and Malakia were assaulted by Haganah land forces.

In the upper Galilee district the Arabs made heavy attacks on Ramat Naphtali and Ein Geb, using artillery and aircraft. The Arabs also struck in the lower Negeb, attacking Hassalai, Nirim, and water installations at Mekoroth. They also struck at Yad Mordecai with artillery and heavy mortar fire.

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