Egyptian Navy Beaten Off In Tel Aviv Sea-Air Battle
By GENE CURRIVANSpecial to THE NEW YORK TIMES.
New York Times (1857-Current file); Jun 5, 1948; ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2002)
pg. 1

Egyptian Navy Beaten Off In Tel Aviv Sea-Air Battle

By GENE CURRIVAN
Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

TEL AVIV, Israel, June 4—What appeared to be an attempt by the Egyptian Navy to land an invasion force in Palestine today developed into a spectacular sea battle that lasted four hours.

Late this afternoon three ships, one of them burning, were seen disappearing over the horizon toward Egypt. They were beaten off in the first sea battle of the war by a single Israeli warship of the corvette type and several aircraft of which one failed to return.

The Egyptian "fleet" consisted of a 2,500-ton transport ship, another craft resembling a small destroyer and an LCT [landing craft, tanks] similar to those used in the World War II invasions.

It is believed here that the Egyptians hoped to land troops from the transport somewhere in the vicinity of Isdud, where one of their garrisons, attempting a northward push, has been trapped. That section is about twenty miles below Tel Aviv.

[In the ground fighting Israeli sources reported the capture of Jenin, apex of the Jenin-Nablus-Tulkarm Arab triangle, but Iraqi sources denied it, asserting that the attackers had been driven out with heavy losses.]

An Israeli communiqué issued tonight said the Egyptian ships "attempted to approach the coast of Tel Aviv."

This correspondent watched the entire engagement and was of the opinion that the ships were heading for the southern coast until attacked and then spread out, but never reached a point less than fifteen miles from here.

The transport, said to be the El Amira Fawzia, was the first one sighted as it came over the horizon. With it, but looking like two specks, were the LCT and the destroyer. They had hardly become visible from Tel Aviv when an Israeli corvette dashed off in their direction. It immediately headed for the destroyer and both opened fire simultaneously. In the early

Continued on Page 3, Column 2

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

CAIRO NAVY BEATEN IN TEL AVIV BATTLE

Continued From Page 1

stages few people here realized what was going on and most persons believed that southern coastal towns were being shelled.

While the destroyer and the corvette were exchanging broadsides at long range, the LCT, which resembled a submarine at a distance, skirted off to the corvette's starboard, or the offshore side, and opened an attack.

A great geyser about two hundred yards off the corvette's starboard showed that the LCT had the range and its next shot fell even closer. The corvette then maneuvered out of range, fired another broadside at the destroyer and temporarily retired.

Bomber Scores a Hit

While the corvette came back and was met just outside here by a supply ship, there was a roar overhead and one of Israel's fighter bombers cut through the clouds to take part in the battle. By this time the Egyptian ships had spread out, with the transport moving out eastward.

The bomber ignored the transport and went for the destroyer, making a direct hit. The destroyer continued to fire its anti-aircraft batteries although afire, and the LCT also opened up. Both were then fairly close together, with the transport circling some distance away but not yet attempting to leave the scene.

About this time the corvette, resupplied, started back into the action, but the other ships seemed to be retiring, especially the destroyer, which was hidden by its own smoke.

Another fighter bomber went out and headed directly for the transport ship. It could be seen coming out of the clouds against the sun and diving. There were several water spouts close by, an indication of "near misses," and that was the last that could be seen, although considerable ack-ack was heard. This plane was not seen to return.

Role of Transport Seen

The transport was an unknown quantity in this action for about two hours. It was not attacked by the corvette or the planes until the last stages. Most of the spectators here, and there were thousands of them, thought it was either an innocent commercial transport caught in the middle of the operation or an immigrant ship trying to make port.

None realized that it was a troop transport until the Israeli plane dropped bombs alongside her. In fact, during the early stages of the battle no one could figure out who was shooting at whom and it was not realized until later that one Israeli corvette was engaging three other ships in battle.

The Damascus radio reported today that the Egyptians were sending large forces to the assistance of Egyptian troops surrounded above Isdud. None has been reported to land and it is assumed that the report referred to this aborted attempt to send reinforcements by sea.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.