ISRAEL AND EGYPT BATTLING IN NEGEB
By GENE CURRIVANSpecial to THE NEW YORK TIMES.
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Attack on a Tel Aviv Convoy Is Held Cause of Outbreak—U. N. Truce Team Held Up

By GENE CURRIVAN
Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

TEL AVIV, Israel, July 28—It was announced here tonight that fighting between Egyptian and Israeli forces had broken out today in the Negeb region of Palestine.

The announcement added that as a result of the fighting a United Nations truce team had been prevented from reaching Gaza.

The truce team reached a point near Hatta but could not continue because of heavy firing by both sides.

According to a Government spokesman here the reason for the battle was an Egyptian attack on a supply convoy attempting to reach Negeb colonies in the Hatta-Karatiya area. The official statement said that Israeli forces were attacking Egyptian communications and vehicle concentrations at Faluja and Iraq el Manshiya to the southeast. It added that United Nations observers went to the scene this afternoon.

As the observers, led by Lieut. Col. Albert Perry, arrived there late in the afternoon during the height of the battle a truce attempt seemed impossible. Colonel Perry was there, not to negotiate a truce, but merely to deliver Col. Louis D. Cooper to the Gaza area where he was to be in charge of observers.

Today's development, although not considered important in the broad picture, does show, accord-

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ing to military experts, that the Negeb convoy line is not open, as was formerly believed, and that the El Majdal-Hebron road, which leads to Jerusalem is not blocked.

This, however, does not change the view held by most observers here that the Egyptians, although in a position to cause considerable trouble from their present strong points in the isolated area, are actually trapped there.

It is now up to other United Nations observers assigned to that point to determine who started the fighting and what effect it will have on the current truce.

There are complications because the Egyptians have never agreed to the free passage of supplies to the Negeb settlements without official supervision. Israeli authorities, on the other hand, have felt that as long as they controlled the roads to the settlements there was no need of supervision and no reason why the convoys should be stopped or controlled.

The Egyptians, however, with their long-range guns, contested this theory and that apparently was the reason for today's battle. Solution of this point now rests with United Nations.

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