Road Is Battleground
By MOSHE BRILLIANT Special to The New York Times.
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TEL AVIV, Israel, Oct. 31—Four Egyptian jets were reported down in dogfights over the Sinai desert today as Israeli and Egyptian infantrymen fought below for control of the highway to Ismailia.

Three of the fighters reported downed were British-made Vampires, and the fourth was a Soviet MIG-15. With three MIG-15's reported shot down yesterday, the Egyptians were said to have lost seven planes since the fighting started Monday. The Israelis said their only loss was one aircraft damaged.

The highway to the Suez Canal city of Ismailia, which became the principal battleground today, is the middle of three lateral roads from the Israeli border to the canal. The southern road was reported to be firmly in Israel's hands up to a point twenty miles from Suez. There has been no action yet in the north near the Mediterranean Coast, where a highway and a railway line link Port Said with the Gaza Strip.

If the Israeli forces of Maj. Gen. Moshe Dayan reach the Mediterranean coast at any point, it is noted, the Gaza Strip of old Palestine would be ripe for the taking.

The Israelis opened a campaign of psychological warfare against the 250,000 Arabs in the Gaza Strip. The state radio at Jerusalem repeatedly broadcast a message in Arabic to the inhabitants.

The broadcast said that Israeli forces were mopping up Egyptian units in the Sinai Peninsula and that the Gaza Strip would shortly be cut off completely from Egypt. The message advised the Arabs to keep tuned to the Israeli state radio for instructions.

Reports reaching here said there was a panic flight by boat from Gaza and down the road to Port Said, which is said to be the only artery across Sinai still under Egyptian control.

Israel does not recognize Egypt's title to the Gaza Strip, which the forces of King Farouk occupied during the Palestine war of 1948-49. However, most Israelis have not coveted the territory because of the dense Arab population there.

The Gaza Strip is about thirty miles long and five miles wide. Thirty per cent of the area comprises sand dunes, and the inhabitants, about 200,000 of whom are Palestinian refugees, live in wretched conditions in the cultivable part.

Strategically, military leaders here have said, possession of the Gaza Strip would ease Israel's security position in the south if the old international boundry is restored after the present fighting. The tip of the Gaza finger is only thirty-five miles from Tel Aviv.

Meanwhile, fighting today in the Sinai desert was getting closer to the Gaza Strip.

The Israelis were reported to be attacking a strong Egyptian position at Abu Aweigila, twenty miles from the Israeli border. The Egyptians were reported to be putting up strong resistance.

An armored convoy speeding to the relief of the garrison was said to have been attacked by Israeli planes near Gebel Libni, about twenty miles to the west. "Scores of Egyptian vehicles were destroyed," according to an Israeli Army spokesman.

Abu Aweigila dominates a point where the highway between Ismailia on the canal and Beersheba in Israel crosses the road to El Arish on the coast, twenty-five miles to the north.

The picture of the Sinai fighting became clearer today. It was learned that the battle started Monday afternoon with Israeli thrusts at Kuntilla and Ras el Naqb, near the southern end of the Israeli-Egyptian border.

The garrisons at both frontier posts were said to have been routed, and the Israeli columns moved westward in half-tracks.

Meanwhile, a unit of airborne troops was reported to have been dropped in the hills approximately twenty miles from Suez. The troops dug in there.

The columns moving from the border advanced over the road toward Suez, it was added. They were strafed by Egyptian warplanes and attacked on the ground by Egyptian garrisons.

The Israelis said that they overcame all resistance and joined the parachutists in the West.

Yesterday another Israeli force was said to have slammed into Quseima, a road junction ten miles from the border opposite the El Auja (Nitsana) demilitarized zone. The garri- and the civilian population fled.

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