British Say Egypt Sank 7 Ships In Suez Canal in Blockade Bid
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Effort Is Reported to Be Successful in Part —Ministry Warns Nation of Possible Oil Shortage and Rationing

Special to The New York Times.

LONDON, Nov. 2—The Egyptians have sunk seven ships in an effort to block the Suez Canal. It was not known here today if the Egyptian efforts had succeeded in closing the canal.

The latest Allied communiqué from Cyprus headquarters said the Egyptians had sunk five more ships in the waterway. Earlier reports from Cairo were that two Egyptian vessels had been sunk, one, a concrete-laden L. S. T. [landing ships, tanks] and the other the frigate Akka.

Blockage of the Suez Canal confronted Britain with possibile restrictions on gasoline consumption.

Harold Watkinson, Minister of Defense, said tonight the canal had been closed by the Egyptians. He told reporters during a television broadcast that as soon as the effects of the blockage were felt "there will have to be some restriction of oil consumption in this country."

Although Mr. Watkinson confined himself to the problem of oil, the cutting of the vital waterway is likely to curtail or at least delay the flow of important raw materials from Africa and Asia to Britain as well as the shipment of manufactured goods to Africa, the Far East, Australia and New Zealand.

Mr. Watkinson said that as far as he knew the canal was completely closed. The Ministry of Defense reported that its information was that the canal was "partially blocked".

The Government announced yesterday that machinery had been prepared to reimpose gasoline rationing. Fifty per cent of Britain's oil supplies normally passes through the canal aboard tankers from the Middle East oil fields.

The transport minister appealed tonight to consumers who could do so without much difficulty to reduce their consumption of oil.

Mr. Watkinson said the Government had a "complete plan" for the diversion of tankers around the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa. The closing of the canal, he said, would produce a gap in oil supplies and as soon as the gap was felt consumer controls would have to be made effective.

For two months, Mr. Watkinson reported, Britain had known that the Egyptians had blockships waiting and ready to move into the canal. From the time the Suez crisis began, the Government has been building up its oil reserves so that at present "all our stocks are full, as full as they can be," he said.

"The original fact," he said, "is that this business is going to show that the use of the canal and the unobstructed use of the canal is vital to every man and woman in this country" the transport minister said.

While Britain is the biggest single user of the canal, its closing could affect the economy of all of Europe. Ports in Europe are the western origin or destination of 85 per cent of the canal traffic.

Just under 25 per cent of Britain's import and export trade is with countries normally reached through the canal. Rubber flows through Suez from Malaya; wheat, meat and wool from Australia; chrome from East Africa, cotton, tea, oils and manganese from India, jute from Pakistan, tea and oils from Ceylon and copper from Africa.

Of the total canal traffic 11 per cent consists of the import and export trade of India, Pakistan, Ceylon and Burma; 14 per cent is to or from Malaya, the East Indies and the Far East; and 7 per cent is to or from East Africa.

New Suez Blocking Reported

CAIRO, Nov. 2 (AP)—Egypt's Army said today that British and French bombers raiding the town of Suez had sunk a big fishing vessel at the southern entrance of the Suez Canal, "thus blocking the entrance."

The center of the 103-mile-long waterway, which by treaty is supposed to be open to the ships of all nations in peace or war, had previously been reported obstructed. The Egyptians announced yesterday that the Egyptian warship Akka had been sent to the bottom by British-French planes near Lake Timsah, midway in the canal.

[The British said that the bombardment only damaged the Akka and that the Egyptians later had scuttled her in the channel. The British have insisted also that their air and naval bombardments have been aimed at strictly military targets.]

A United States Embassy attaché, Brooks McClure of New York, said that only about 200 Americans out of approximately 1,900 registered with the United States Consulate still remained in Egypt, "but some United States nationals we never knew were around are now showing up." He had no estimate of the number in this unregistered group.

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