JOHNSON IS TOLD OF MIDEAST CLASH
By HEDRICK SMITH Special to The New York Times
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Outbreak Follows Capital's Report That High Cairo Official Is Due in U.S.

By HEDRICK SMITH
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Monday, June 5 — President Johnson was alerted today to reports that war had begun between Israel and the United Arab Republic.

"Fighting has broken out," one Government official reported. "How extensive it is, we don't know at this moment. But there is shooting going on."

At the State Department, offiscial, said the first report of fighting came at 2:05 A.M. on the Jerusalem radio in a Hebrew language broadcast. They said the radio reported "fierce fighting" under way in "southern area." Details were vague.

Soon thereafter, American broadcast monitors in the Middle East picked up reports on the Cairo radio that Cairo had been bombed.

American officials said they

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President Is Told of Mideast Fighting

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had indications to confirm that fighting had erupted but no firsthand confirmation that Cairo had been attacked. One official said that the reports received in Washington so far made it impossible to get an adequate picture of exactly what kind of military clash had taken place.

Washington said it had second-hand information that Israel was preparing to ask for a United Nations Security Council meeting "on this clash of forces." Officials said that everyone in the State Department who had been dealing with the Mideast crisis "from Secretary Rusk on down" had been alerted and was at work. They said the President had been alerted very quickly.

The news of war came only about three hours after officials here had disclosed that Gamal Abdel Nasser had accepted an invitation to send one of his Vice Presidents to Washington to discuss the emergency in the Middle East with President Johnson.

No Further Commitment

The officials said Zakariya Mohieddine, a Vice President and former Minister of the Interior with a reputation for moderation and for getting along well with Westerners, would arrive Wednesday. Mr. Mohieddine, the third ranking official in the United Arab Republic, will be the highest ranking Egyptian to visit the United States since 1952, when the monarchy was overthrown.

American officials were encouraged by what was regarded as a diplomatic breakthrough that could help find a way out of the impasse caused by the Egyptian proclamation that the Strait of Tiran was not open to Israeli ships or strategic cargoes for Israel. The Strait of Tiran is the entrance to the Gulf of Aqaba, which is the waterway to Israel's port of Elath.

But American officials stressed that so far President Nasser had made no commitment except to agree to send an envoy to the United States for discussions.

The State Department refused to comment on reports of the visit. Robert J. McCloskey, the department spokesman, also withheld comment on reports from Cairo that the trip had been arranged through an exchange of messages between Presidents Johnson and Nasser.

It was authoritatively stated that at one point the United States had considered sending Vice President Humphrey to Cairo. Cairo reports said this had been mentioned by President Johnson in his letter to President Nasser.

Officials said privately that a decision on a Humphrey visit to the United Arab Republic would probably depend on the outcome of the Mohieddine visit.

Administration sources said that the United States learned only yesterday that Mr. Mohieddine, one of the original group of military officers who helped President Nasser organize the coup d'état in Egypt in 1952, would be coming to Washington this week.

The officials said that the American invitation had been relayed through the American Embassy in Cairo, apparently in the Presidential message, late last week.

It was understood that Vice President Mohieddine would be accompanied by Dr. Mahmoud Fawzi, the Deputy Premier for Foreign Affairs.

Until Washington got word that the two would be coming to the United States, President Nasser appeared to be fending off Western efforts to engage him in negotiations over his proclamation of a blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba.

Charles W. Yost, a former American Ambassador to Morocco, who was sent to Cairo last week as a special envoy, left there without seeing President Nasser. British diplomatic efforts had been equally fruitless.

The Egyptian decision to publicize broadly the Mohieddine visit through the semiofficial Cairo newspaper Al Ahram was interpreted here as evidence that President Nasser regarded the American invitation and the promise of high-level talks as an asset to his prestige throughout the Arab world.

It was apparently partly because of the forthcoming visit that the United States has delayed the issuance of a declaration by the maritime powers reaffirming the right of free passage through the Strait of Tiran for all countries. President Nasser has said that he would not recognize such a declaration and would consider it an act of aggression. Its issuance now would presumably upset the Mohieddine visit.

The United States has had difficulty lining up support for such a declaration. Israel and the Netherlands are reported to be the only countries firmly committed to signing it. The British Government, although understood to have endorsed a draft, was reported to be "dragging its feet" on making it public. London was understood to be reluctant to join any step that might involve a forcible challenge of the blockade proclaimed by President Nasser on May 22.

Some Congressmen have spoken out strongly against any unilateral American military challenge. Senator John C. Stennis, Democrat of Mississippi, said today that the United States could not take military action alone in the Middle East because "we are down to the nub" in military manpower because of the war in Vietnam.

Mike Mansfield, the Senate majority leader, said he thought the Administration would consult Congress further, and probably seek its approval, before taking any action involving force.

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