

**AFTER BLOODY HISTORY OF SINAI:**

**ISRAEL SUFFERS WITHDRAWAL PAINS**

JERUSALEM (WNS) -- When Israel completed its withdrawal from Sinai, it left behind not only a large strategic area, the rubble of once prosperous settlements and natural resources, but also the scenes of its bloodiest wars and greatest losses in terms of lives and equipment. The region has become the grave of more Israeli soldiers than any other area of combat in the five wars Israel has fought since it proclaimed independence in May, 1948. The 15 years of Israeli occupation which ended with the withdrawal, was the longest in a series of occupations and withdrawals than began 34 years ago.

The first time the Israel army entered Sinai was in December, 1948, in pursuit of an Egyptian army that had invaded the new Jewish State only a few months earlier. The Egyptians retreated and Israeli forces occupied the northern salient of the peninsula until forced to withdraw under urgent Anglo - American pressure. Egypt retained the Gaza Strip and, despite the armistice agreements, there was no peace along the southern borders.

Border warfare was incessant and Israel, hoping to put an end to it, joined eight years later with the British and French effort to regain the recently nationalized Suez Canal and unseat the troublesome regime of Egypt's President Gamal Abdel Nasser. In October, 1956, in what came to be known as the Sinai campaign, the Israeli army thrust into the peninsula in force and within eight days was entrenched on the eastern banks of the canal.

The British and French forces withdrew. The Israeli army remained stubbornly in place for several months until Eisenhower's threat to withdraw American economic and political support of Israel forced Premier David Ben Gurion to yield the security asset only recently won. Early in 1957, the Israeli forces pulled out of Sinai for the second time.

In May, 1967, Nasser, firmly entrenched in Cairo and bent on international adventurism, summarily ordered United Nations peacekeeping forces out of the peninsula and declared a blockade of Israeli shipping entering the Straits of Tiran. The Israeli government, then headed by Premier Levi Eshkol, debated long and arduously over how to counter this new menace.

In early June, a powerful Israeli army supported by the air force swept again into Sinai. Egyptian forces crumbled. On the sixth day after the start of hostilities, Israel was in possession of the entire peninsula. That sweeping victory has

gone down in history as the Six-Day-War.

But it brought no peace. Almost immediately, the Egyptians opened their war of attrition. Powerless to retake Sinai, they resorted to artillery and air warfare along the new frontier of the Suez Canal. It did not command headlines abroad, but it was costly to both sides. Between March 1969 and August, 1970, Israel suffered 244 soldiers dead and 683 wounded. On August 7, 1970, Nasser agreed to an American call for a cease-fire. Under the cover of that demarche, the Egyptians moved their missile batteries for the first time to the banks of the canal.

The cease-fire brought political stalemate. But when Anwar Sadat succeeded to the Presidency of Egypt after Nasser's death, he adopted parallel political and military strategies. He abandoned his predecessor's strong Soviet orientation and moved closer to the United States, exerting pressure for a political solution with Israel. At the same time, he planned a military strike against Israel in coordination with Syria. The surprise attack on October 6, 1973, Yom Kippur, caught Israel unprepared.

Egyptian forces crossed the Suez Canal and overcame the Israeli defenders on the first day of battle. Although Israel swiftly mobilized, and with a life - line of military supplies airlifted from the U.S. gained the better of her foes, the Yom Kippur War was by far the costliest of Israel's battlefield experiences.

Between October, 1973, and the first disengagement agreement on January 18, 1974, 1,630 Israeli soldier died, 4,242 were wounded and 232 were taken prisoners of war. The battle for Sinai ended in military stalemate because of the cease - fire imposed by the United States and the United Nations. But Sadat had succeeded in breaking the political stalemate.

By February 22, 1976, the Israeli army completed the evacuation of 6,180 square kilometers of Sinai under the terms of the disengagement agreement. This was the first fruit of Henry Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy in the Middle East. It was also the first time Israel returned territory to an Arab foe in accordance with an agreement.

Israel relinquished control of the strategic Giddi and Mitla passes in the Sinai mountains, the traditional Egyptian attack route to Israel's borders. Also given up were the Abu Rodeis oilfields which had been supplying almost 66 percent of Israel's petroleum needs. Later, the even more productive Alma oilfields in the Gulf of Suez were returned to Egypt ending Israel's brief period of oil self-sufficiency.

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**CANNON WANTS MEDICARE TO COVER HOSPICES**

WASH. -- Sen. Howard Cannon today called for medicare coverage of hospice care services for the terminally ill.

"For many years, the thrust of health care in the United States has been toward the goal of extending life," Cannon said.

"Our efforts in these areas have been rewarding. However, we have lost sight of a critical consideration -- how to care adequately and sensitively for those who are dying."

The bill Cannon has co - sponsored would permit medicare recipients who are expected to die within six months to elect a full range of hospice services.

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