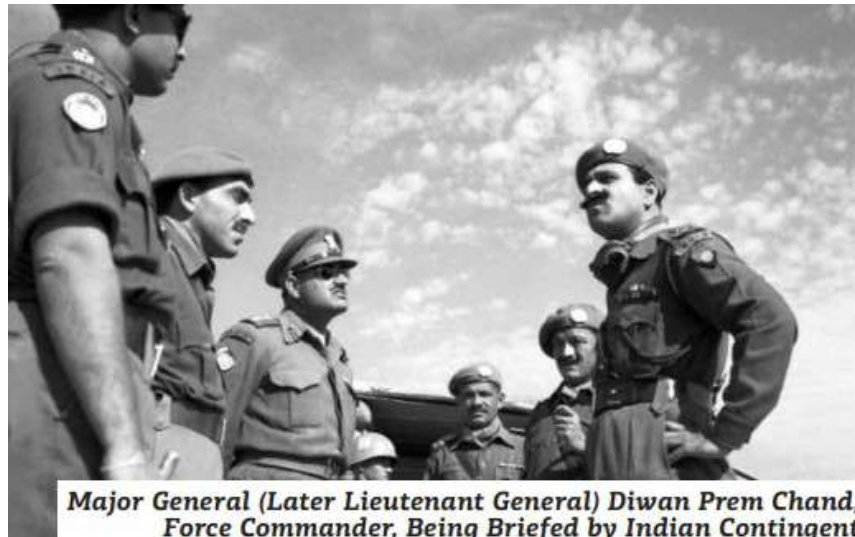# THE UN PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN GAZA

The need for UN Peacekeeping in the Gaza strip emerged in October 1956, when the troika of Britain, France, and Israeli forces captured the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza strip. A large number of Egyptian troops were taken prisoners. Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal Company to register its protest against the forceful intervention. When the United Nations intervened to bring peace to the region, it negotiated a ceasefire in November 1956 by forming a peacekeeping force known as the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF). This was the first time the United Nation had sent an armed contingent, which was considered seminal in United Nation Peacekeeping.

Adhering to the United Nation's triad principle, UNEF's presence in Gaza was not an enforcement mission, but rather a peacekeeping force that worked with the consent and collaboration of all parties involved in the conflict. The UNEF's role was to oversee the withdrawal of the occupying forces and once that was achieved, to act as a buffer between the Egyptian and Israeli forces and provide impartial ceasefire surveillance. This UN peacekeeping contingent was stationed solely on Egyptian territory, with the consent of the Egyptian Government, and patrolled the Egypt-Israel armistice demarcation line as well as the international frontier to the South of the Gaza Strip.[1]

Major General (Later Lieutenant General) Diwan Prem Chand, Force Commander, Being Briefed by Indian Contingent

Source: The Blue Helmet Odyssey: Defining India's UN Footprints. Center for United Nations Peacekeeping, New Delhi India

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[1] The Blue Helmet Odyssey: Defining India's UN Footprints. Center for United Nations Peacekeeping, New Delhi India (pg no 4-5)

Indian forces have participated in some of the world's most arduous operations, troops have taken part in some of the most difficult operations, and their conduct has earned them worldwide acclaim. Indian forces have demonstrated their unique ability to sustain significant troop commitments for extended periods of time, and the UNEF operation in Egypt remains one such demanding mission.

The Indian Army participated in the UNEF with more than 12,000 personnel. This operation involved 393 officers, 409 JCOs, and 12383 other ranks over the course of 11 years. A headquarters, an Infantry Battalion, an Army Service Corps platoon, detachments from the Corps of Signals, Ordnance, Medical, Military Police, and Army Postal Service were among the Indian contingents. Indian army officers Major General P S Gyani and Brigadier I J Rikhye were Force Commanders for this United Nations Mission.

Source: Here, Indian troops join Danish and Swedish Peacekeepers on the training exercise on the beach of Gaza in 1958 as a part of UN Emergency Force (UNEF).
India: A long and deep tradition of contributing to UN peacekeeping | UN News

This Indian deployment in Egypt actively contributed to the exchange of prisoners, monitored the withdrawal of Israeli Forces, and functioned as an effective buffer between the opposing forces. Several posts were established by the Indian forces for the observation of the borders and to maintain a ceasefire. The troops were responsible for facilitating negotiations between the opposing forces and demining the area. The peacekeeping mission was extremely risky, as many Indian soldiers suffered severe wounds and casualties.

The Indian government opted to withdraw from the mission in 1967, just before the commencement of Arab-Israeli war, for a multitude of reasons, one of which was the high rate of casualties among the Indian Armed Forces. However, India's successful conduct during this operation became an example for other countries to emulate.

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