

Israelis Resume Offensive, Take Key Rail Town

Ras El Ain, Controlling Jerusalem Water, Falls; Fighting Grows in South

By Kenneth Bilby

By Wireless to the Herald Tribune

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RAS EL AIN, Palestine, July 13.

—Israeli forces resumed their offensive on the central front this morning, pushing without opposition through this rail junction which controls the Jerusalem water supply.

Iraqi artillery units, which for three days have been shelling Petah Tiqva from Ras el Ain, fled into the Judean hills during the early morning darkness. They were hopelessly outflanked by the Jewish capture a few hours earlier of Majdal Yaba, an Arab village one mile east.

Tel Aviv received its heaviest air attack since the truce ended when Egyptian twin-engined Dakotas dropped at least eight 100-pound bombs on the residential sections this morning, killing fourteen persons and wounding fifty. Fighters escorted the Dakotas.

Haifa was bombed for the first time today, but a government bulletin said slight damage was caused in two raids. There was no report of casualties.

The battle in the south reached its greatest intensity as the Egyptians threw wave after wave of infantry against Negba and Ibdis. The Jews said they repelled every assault.

A mobile Jewish commando column was reported to have ambushed an Egyptian infantry company in the same region and killed half of the company. The remainder fled, leaving much equipment behind. The Jews said they also penetrated five villages and blew up an Egyptian troop billet in Isdud.

The capture of Ras el Ain by Jewish infantry with armored support removed the most immediate Arab threat to Tel Aviv, ten miles away. A strongly fortified hillside village, it contains the main pumping station and reservoirs for Jerusalem's water supply.

The Iraqi flight was so precipitous that the pumping station machinery was left intact. The Arabs booby-trapped the interior of the huge cement building, but fires which they started in the vicinity did little damage.

The Jewish commander at Ras el Ain said army engineers would clean out the mines from the waterworks and civilian experts then would put the pumping station in order. He predicted that water soon would begin flowing through the underground pipeline to Jerusalem.

Except for one relay pumping station at Arab-held Latrun, the entire line is now in Jewish hands. Water remains the greatest single problem to the Holy City's populace, there having been no flow through the pipeline since the British evacuated Jerusalem May 14.

Israeli units retook Deir Tarif after a brief skirmish, and then attacked Beit Nabala, which the Arabs had recaptured from the Jews. But the Jews were around the village on three sides, and its fall appeared likely within twenty-four hours.

The lightning Jewish drive has pushed the central front from two to five miles deep into the foothills of the Judean range. The advance point at Qubab, on the main route to Jerusalem, is only five miles from main Arab Legion defenses around Latrun. The Jews are now in a position to hit the legion from the east, west and south.

Israeli patrols are probing aggressively through the craggy hills, and unofficial reports have reached Tel Aviv that the Legion is rapidly regrouping to meet the new threat. Sizable forces are reportedly being withdrawn from the Latrun road in order to establish a new western defensive line, anchored on Latrun and extending north toward Beit Nabala.

The last resistance in captured Lydda ended with the fall of the police fortress there. It was not disclosed how this was effected, but it is believed that 100 Arabs who had collected in the police fortress, allegedly under British officers, slipped out during the night and reached Legion lines in the rear of Beit Nabala.

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In Jerusalem, mixed Arab forces made a minor effort to penetrate Jewish positions in Mea Shearim. They were beaten off without difficulty, and the Jews said they had no losses. Irregular exchanges of shellfire continued, but front lines through the Holy City remained static.

Arab Leaders Meet

CAIRO, July 13 (AP).—Arab leaders met in Amman today to plan intensified war against the Jews, but a well informed Jewish source said a new Palestine truce is likely.

The Arab League secretary, General Abduel Rahman Azzam Pasha, said "there is no question of a truce." In Amman, the Trans-Jordan capital, Azzam Pasha said his meetings there with Iraqi, Syrian, Lebanese and Trans-Jordan officials were "in the interest of intensifying the Arab war effort in Palestine."

But a source close to the Israeli government said in Tel Aviv that there seems "every reason to expect" a new truce, possibly by the end of this week.

The Jews today captured Suba, a strongpoint just below the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem highway, five miles west of the Holy City.

An Israeli Army spokesman said Jewish possession of Suba "finally puts an end to the Arab dream of cutting the road to Tel Aviv." Suba was taken by Palmach storm troops without combat after a bombardment drove the Arab defenders from a height above the vital road to Tel Aviv.