

## Israel's High Price for Carter's Peace Plan

Israel, which had repeatedly been the target of shipping blockades, military assaults and terrorist attacks staged from the area, made far greater economic and strategic sacrifices than did Egypt in order to reach a peace settlement. While it received additional U.S. aid for withdrawing, Israel gave up much of its strategic depth in the Sinai, returning the area to a neighbor that had repeatedly used it as a launching point for attacks. Israel also relinquished direct control of its shipping lanes to and from Eilat, 1,000 miles of roadways, homes, factories, hotels, health facilities, and agricultural villages.

Because Egypt insisted that Jewish civilians leave the Sinai, 7,000 Israelis were uprooted from their homes and businesses, which they had spent years building in the desert. This was a physically and emotionally wrenching experience, particularly for the residents of Yamit, some of whom had to be forcibly removed from their homes by soldiers.

Israel also lost electronic early-warning stations situated on Sinai mountaintops that provided data on military movement on the western side of the Suez Canal, as well as the areas near the Gulf of Suez and the Gulf of Eilat, which were vital to its defense against an attack from the east. Israel was forced to relocate more than 170 military installations, airfields, and army bases after it withdrew.

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By turning over the Sinai to Egypt, Israel may have given up its only chance to become energy-independent. The Alma oil field in the southern Sinai, discovered and developed by Israel, was transferred to Egypt in November 1979. When Israel gave up this field, it had become the country's largest single source of energy, supplying half the country's energy needs. Israel, which estimated the value of untapped reserves in the Alma field at \$100 billion, had projected that continued development there would make the country self-sufficient in energy by 1990.

Begin, like Sadat, was willing to go the extra mile to achieve peace. Although he faced intense opposition from within his Likud Party, Begin froze Israeli settlements in the West Bank to facilitate the progress of negotiations. Despite the Carter Administration's tilt toward Egypt during the talks, Begin remained determined to continue the peace process. In the end, he agreed to return to Egypt the strategically critical Sinai -- 91 percent of the territory won by Israel during the Six-Day War -- in exchange for Sadat's promise of peace.