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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

May 15, 1973

EO 13526 3.3(b)(6)&gt;25Yrs

EO 13526 3.3(b)(1)&gt;25Yrs

MEMORANDUM FOR

DR. KISSINGER

FROM:

HAROLD H. SAUNDERS

SUBJECT:

WSAG Meeting on Mid East Tensions --

(b)(1)

(b)(3)

1. Egyptian state of military preparedness:

--Egypt's internal preparations -- mock air raids, civil defense exercises, "war" meetings, etc. -- are not assessed as practical steps towards war.

--External indicators -- Egyptian consultations and increased military cooperation with other Arabs -- do exist. Diplomatic activity, however, appears to anticipate the forthcoming UN Security Council debate. Ismail's visit to France is noteworthy in that regard.

--There are no military indicators suggesting practical preparations for war. Most Egyptian military movements can be explained (those related to fear of Israeli reprisal for the Mirage transfer, for example), others are routine or comparable to past "emergency" situations.

--The principle development has been the deployment in Egypt of the Mirage. They are the only fighters Egypt has which have a radius (flying low to penetrate Israeli defenses) of reaching Israel. Egyptian air force exercises are otherwise now slightly larger in number but there is no information they are preparing for war.

--Forward movement of SAM sites in large numbers towards the Canal would cause concern. However, the missile order along the Canal has generally not changed.

--Stationing of "symbolic" forces of other Arabs on Egyptian territory is not an indicator of war. Such moves relate to Sadat's efforts to portray a closing of Arab ranks, to enhance his image (in his view) re the US. They do not change any balance of forces in the area.

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2. Analysis of Syrian posture.

--Syria has taken steps which could be interpreted as preparation for war: (a) Syrian forces on the front are more actively conducting exercises than in previous months. (b) Syrian air force attack exercises against Israel are in their greatest period of concentration and for the first time include MIG-21 participation. (c) Recent arrivals of AN-12 aircraft from Algeria are noteworthy. [Algeria has reportedly promised to station some MIG squadrons, possibly some MIG-21s, in Syria.] (d) Assad's recent secret visit to Moscow.

--However, there are also indicators calm will prevail. The order of battle along Golan is quiet and there are forthcoming elections at home which will occupy the Syrian military.

Overall conclusions

--Probability is low that Sadat intends to renew hostilities as he realizes the severe consequences. Moreover, Sadat doesn't really want to break the deadlock by force. He wants instead to bolster his own position (which renewal of fighting would defeat).

--Syria will not independently renew fighting, though it may participate at some future point if Egypt began fighting first.

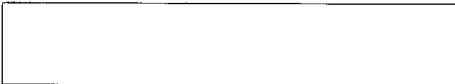
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