

CONFIDENTIAL

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MIDDLE EAST

MOSCOW SUSTAINS CAUTIOUS COVERAGE OF EVENTS IN LEBANON

Moscow's continued cautious treatment of developments stemming from the army-fedayeen clashes in Lebanon suggests its concern to see the conflict resolved. Maintaining an essentially even-handed approach toward the Lebanese and the Palestinians, Moscow has cited both sides' reassurances concerning their peaceful intentions and their efforts to eliminate the unspecified "causes" of the conflict. But implicit admonitions to potential troublemakers were apparent in PRAVDA's criticism of the actions of Palestinian "extremists" and in treatment of Syria's role in the crisis.

An initial PRAVDA account of the clashes noted that they developed following incidents involving "Palestinian partisans," and PRAVDA on the 12th remonstrated against the actions of extremist elements within the resistance movement. Such a rebuke was issued in the wake of Israel's 9-10 April raid in Beirut, and in both instances PRAVDA's criticism was broadcast to Arab audiences. Apprehension over possible Syrian intervention was reflected in an Arabic-language commentary on the 14th which pointedly omitted Syria in naming some Arab states which contributed to easing the Lebanese crisis. PRAVDA on the 10th had reported without comment that Syria had condemned Lebanese actions against the Palestinian resistance movement, and the following day cited Israeli Defense Minister Dayan as warning of Israeli actions in the event of further conflict in Lebanon and "on the Lebanese-Syrian border."

Moscow has predictably accused Israel of aggravating the situation through military maneuvers and threatening statements. It has made no mention of the United States in connection with the conflict, ignoring reports in U.S. and Arab media that Washington was considering sending small arms ammunition to Lebanon. The propaganda has gone no further than charges that imperialist-directed "subversive elements" were at least partially responsible for the clashes.