

10 October 1973

NOTE FOR FILE:

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gave Frank Slatinshek,
Chief Counsel, House Armed Services
Committee staff, a copy of the Middle
East briefing outline and current situation
report on the above date. (Copies attached)

MC

P. S. Slatinshek returned the documents
on 11 October 1973.

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

10 October 1973

Highlights of the Middle East Situation

THE MILITARY SITUATION

GENERAL

1. The war enters the fifth day showing no promise of a short decisive campaign for either side. The evening passed quietly on both fronts with Israeli air attacks starting at daybreak. No concurrent ground action has been detected on either front.

2. The Egyptians have established their force firmly on the eastern bank of the Suez Canal, forcing an Israeli admission that their ground forces have been unable to push them back. In the Golan Heights, despite heavy fighting, the Israelis have been unable to push the Syrians back beyond the 1967 cease-fire line, and they admit that they have not broken the Syrian army. The ground is still contested, however, and no clear-cut advantage is evident for either side.

3. Heavy fighting continues on both fronts, but neither side has made deep advances.

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5. The introduction of another Syrian armored division into the battle for the Golan Heights yesterday is helping Damascus to hold its ground despite continuing heavy Israeli airstrikes.

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[Redacted]

EGYPTIAN FRONT

6. Egyptian armored and infantry forces continue to hold the east bank of the canal, and Tel Aviv admits that Egyptian forces have advanced 10 kilometers into the Sinai. Cairo claims penetrations as much as 20 kilometers. Israeli air attacks on the canal bridges appear to be having only limited success.

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[Redacted]

7. The Israeli air force this morning renewed its attacks on Egyptian positions on the west bank of the Canal and on the bridges crossing the Canal. According to Israeli press accounts, there has been little activity along the canal over the evening. The Egyptians continued to resupply their forces over the night without opposition from air attack. Despite losses taken during the air attacks of the last few days, the Egyptians evidently are able to keep their bridges in operation and their forces supplied.

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[REDACTED]

10. Although the military situation is still far from settled, some Israeli newspapers are calling for the destruction of Syrian and Egyptian military capability to prevent future Arab attacks. A columnist with Haaretz, an authoritative Tel Aviv daily, however, points out the dilemma for Israel if it should carry out such a policy. The columnist argues that a resounding defeat would make it almost impossible for Arab governments to enter into negotiations with Israel. He said that a military victory could serve as a political instrument if military aims were accompanied by political aims. He notes, however, that the Israeli Government has made it clear that it has no political aims in this war and concludes that the main fruit of the struggle is also likely to be a military victory.

11. Few details are available on the ground fighting, but Cairo claims that a major tank battle occurred in the Sinai this morning and that its forces destroyed over a hundred Israeli tanks.

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[REDACTED]
The Egyptians are husbanding their air force and depending on their SAM air defenses, particularly the SA-6 which can move forward with the ground forces, to defend against the Israeli air attacks. [REDACTED]

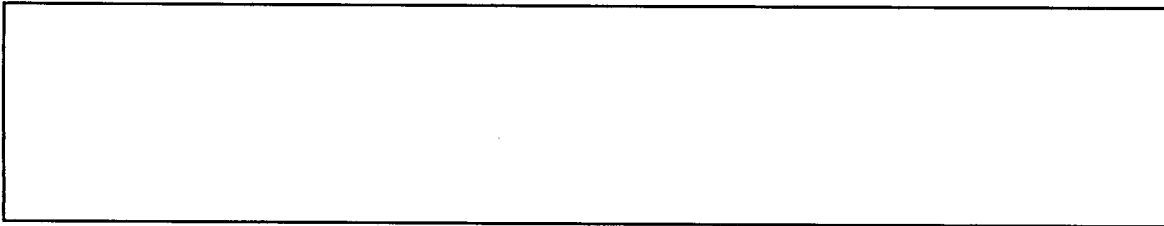
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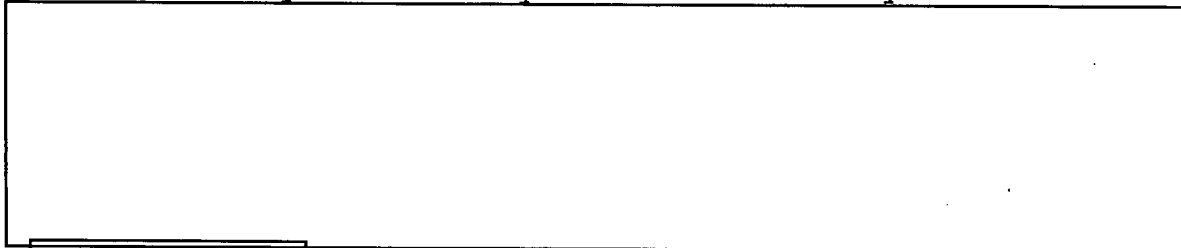
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SYRIAN FRONT

14. Heavy air activity resumed over the Syrian front



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[Redacted] An Israeli spokesman claims that "accurate hits" were made on fuel depots in Hims and the naval headquarters at Latakia. A Syrian military spokesman has stated that six Israeli aircraft were downed on these raids. The Damascus radio also claims that four Israeli planes attempted to strafe the Damascus International airport, but that Syrian air defenses downed three of the planes.

16. On the ground, two Syrian armored divisions and three infantry divisions continued to hold Qunaytirah, in the central part of the Golan Heights this morning, where UN observers reported heavy fighting. An Israeli report that their forces crossed into Syria late this afternoon, Tel Aviv time, has not yet been confirmed. With the introduction of another armored division into the Golan Heights on 9 October, the Syrians may now have as many as 700 operational tanks, 28,000 infantry, and 10,000 to 15,000 armored troops in the Golan area.

17. Although Syria has reportedly lost 55 aircraft, it still has sufficient aircraft for air defense operations, and Syrian airfields are believed to be essentially serviceable.

18. As the fighting entered its fifth day the situation on the Golan Heights remains stable after a quiet night. There are conflicting reports from both Syria and Israel concerning the positions they hold, with both sides claiming to hold the cease-fire line. Syrian forces still retain possession of Qunaytirah despite Israeli attempts to retake it.

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[Redacted]

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19. Radio Jerusalem reports that early this morning the IAF began conducting heavy air strikes against Syrian armored forces in the Heights. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]
in the fighting. On the ground, fighting this morning seems to be limited to minor skirmishes.

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[Redacted]
Beirut newspapers state that the Iraqi contingent numbers 16,000 men, 100 tanks, and has taken up positions on the Heights. There are no other reports that the Iraqis have reached the Heights area.

21. The Syrians have published a list of those injured in yesterday's attack on the Soviet cultural mission in Damascus. No Russian names figure in the list, and Syrian officials refuse to confirm or deny that 30 Soviets were killed in the raid. The wreckage of the building has not been completely cleared, however, and further bodies may be discovered. According to press reports, the Syrian director of the mission was badly injured and a number of Syrian students were wounded. Other press cables from Damascus report that the oil refineries at Hims were severely damaged by Israeli air strikes and that three Israeli aircraft were lost in the attack.

DAMASCUS AIR RAID

22. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] damage to the diplomatic and foreign residential area in Damascus is severe as a result of yesterday's raid. [Redacted] total civilian casualties in the city to be about 150 plus more than 200 wounded. [Redacted] no American casualties. [Redacted] the mood in Damascus as "ugly." The widespread rumor throughout the city is that American pilots carried out the bombing.

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COMMITMENTS BY OTHER ARAB STATES

23. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] The Iraqis have committed air units and ground forces, the

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[REDACTED]

Moroccans are sending their second contingent of ground troops, and Tunisian troops are reported to have arrived in Egypt. Also, the Algerians have dispatched some MIG aircraft to Egypt, and now the Saudis [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] are preparing to move troops to Syria through Jordan.

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[REDACTED]

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SOVIET AIRLIFT

25. Moscow appears to be mounting a resupply effort to Syria and possibly to Egypt. [REDACTED] Soviet military-related AN-12 transport aircraft landed [REDACTED] Syria [REDACTED] Most of the aircraft have landed at Damascus, although some have landed at Aleppo in northern Syria. This activity probably involves resupply of air defense equipment--SAM missiles and conventional anti-aircraft guns. [REDACTED]

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26. The apparent resupply effort suggests that Moscow has reassessed its earlier cautious response to the Middle East conflict and decided to cast its lot more fully on the side of the Arabs.

27. This decision may be the result of the relatively good showing of the Arab forces as well as a Soviet desire to protect its broader Middle East investment.

28. Moscow, however, has not stepped up its media attention to the Middle East situation and has played in low-key yesterday's bombing of its cultural center in Damascus. A TASS dispatch issued today on the attack on Damascus contained only brief reference to the bombing of the cultural center and made no mention of casualties.

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