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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Thursday 21 September 1978 CG NIDC 78/221

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ISRAEL: Reaction to Camp David

[] A telephone survey by the Dahaf polling organization indicates that about 60 percent of the Israeli public approves abandoning Israel's Sinai settlements as part of a peace agreement with Egypt. Barring a major Israeli-Egyptian dispute over interpretation, the US Embassy in Tel Aviv believes an overwhelming majority of Knesset deputies probably will vote in favor of the summit accords.

[] Predictably, the Dahaf poll also shows a dramatic jump in the popularity of Prime Minister Begin, Defense Minister Weizman, and Foreign Minister Dayan. Over 78 percent approved of Begin's performance, an increase of 15 percent since the last Dahaf poll in late August. Weizman's popularity rose about 10 percentage points to 82 percent and Dayan's increased over 20 points to 72 percent.

[] An informal poll earlier this week of about 70 Knesset deputies showed that two-thirds support the Camp David accords. The US Embassy estimates that as many as 100 of the 120 Knesset members will approve the agreements.

[] The major procedural difficulty in arranging the Knesset vote focuses on Begin's intention to hold a separate debate over removing the Sinai settlements a few days after the vote on the peace agreements now scheduled for next Monday. Begin hopes to gain a parliamentary consensus in support of the summit accords and transfer to the Knesset principal responsibility for removal of the Sinai settlers, which he finds psychologically painful to advocate.

[] Opposition Labor Party chairman Shimon Peres demands that both questions be debated as a "package deal." Most Labor Knesset deputies reportedly are inclined to vote in favor of the accords and evacuation of the settlements if debated as a package, but they have threatened to boycott a separate session on the settlements issue. Acting Prime Minister Yadin, who says that a consensus of opposition and coalition leaders favors one vote, intends to try to change Begin's mind after he returns to Israel. []

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ARAB STATES: Damascus Summit

[] *The leaders of Syria, Algeria, Libya, South Yemen, and the Palestine Liberation Organization convened in Damascus yesterday to coordinate their position on the Camp David agreements. Syrian President Assad appears determined to make his own decision on Syria's reaction to the agreements.*

[] This is the third summit of the Steadfastness Front, formed last December to oppose the Egyptian peace initiative. To date, the Front has been unable to propose a viable alternative to the Egyptian-Israeli talks, and it is unlikely that much will emerge from the Damascus summit. Iraq has refused to participate because of its feud with Syria.

[] The Syrian media have been subdued in their reporting on the steadfastness meeting--an indication that Assad is determined not to let the radical Arabs dictate Syrian reaction to the Camp David agreements. Assad's willingness to meet with Secretary Vance on Saturday--the first such meeting since last December--is a further sign that Assad wants to indicate that he favors a comprehensive peace agreement.

[] Nonetheless, Assad probably views the Camp David accords as a thinly veiled separate peace agreement between Egypt and Israel. He has always feared that a bilateral arrangement would permit Israel to remain intransigent on the Palestinian question and the Golan Heights. The US Embassy in Damascus reports that many Syrians are unhappy that the Camp David accords failed to mention the Golan Heights issue.

[] The Syrians, moreover, have to be concerned about their isolation in the Arab world and are probably apprehensive that Jordan will ultimately join the peace talks, leaving Syria as the only confrontation state. []

LEBANON: Reaction to Camp David

[] *The outcome of the Camp David summit will probably cause militant Lebanese Christian leaders to postpone at least temporarily their plans for a massive provocation of Syrian forces. The summit's results, however, have probably reinforced*

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[REDACTED]

the militants' belief that they can count on Israeli support for an eventual confrontation with the Syrians and Palestinians. We have no evidence that Israel is prepared to intervene to help the Christians.

[REDACTED] // Militant Maronite Christian leaders like Phalangist militia head Bashir Jumayyil and National Liberal Party chief Camille Shamun will probably conclude that the Israelis do not want a Lebanese crisis to jeopardize post - Camp David negotiations. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The Maronite militants probably have concluded that despite current restraints on Israel, the results of Camp David will solidify their alliance with Israel. They reason that Israel will be even more concerned about the threat from Syria and the Palestinians, and thus be more willing to support the Maronites in a showdown with their common enemies.

[REDACTED] Both Phalangist and National Liberal Party leaders have described the Camp David accords as "disastrous" for Lebanon because they do not deal with the question of the Palestinians in Lebanon. The US Embassy reports that both Christians and Muslims fear that reactions to the Camp David agreements will lead to more violence. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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