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NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION

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ARAB STATES: Steadfastness Summit

[redacted] //Hardline Arab states, led by Syria, stepped up their efforts yesterday to form a broad Arab consensus opposed to the Camp David agreements. Libyan leader Qadhafi and Palestine Liberation Organization chief Arafat interrupted the hardliners' meeting in Damascus to meet with Jordan's King Hussein in northern Jordan.//

[redacted] //The US Embassy in Damascus reports that the hardline leaders at the summit of the Steadfastness Front appear to be trying to avoid the rhetorical tirades that characterized previous Front summits. They are trying to draft a charter open to all Arab states that would affirm the need for unity and provide for joint military and economic measures.//

[redacted] //The hardliners clearly hope they can dissuade Hussein from accepting the Camp David accords. During their meeting, Qadhafi probably offered financial inducements to Hussein to maintain his distance from the Camp David agreement. The relationship between Jordan and Libya has been improving over the past year.//

[redacted] //There are numerous press reports that Hussein will join the Steadfast group as a result of his discussions with Arafat and Qadhafi, [redacted]

[redacted] The King has scheduled a press conference for today.//

[redacted] //Arafat's presence at the meeting with the Jordanian King is surprising. Although he and Hussein met in Cairo in March 1977, they have had only limited contacts since the Jordanian Army drove Palestinian forces out of the country in 1970. The Jordanians had flatly refused to permit Arafat to visit Jordan since then, and Arafat's visit is likely to upset conservative East Bankers and the Army, which have bitter memories of the 1970 fighting. [redacted]

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[redacted] The move toward moderation by the Maronite leaders may reflect only a tactical maneuver while they assess the impact of the Camp David accords on the situation in Lebanon. The emerging consensus could easily erode as the parties get down to specific issues--such as the size of the force, the length of the renewal, and whether Lebanese security forces will replace Syrian units in both the Christian and Muslim areas of Beirut.

[redacted] In the past, the Syrians have rejected Christian demands that Lebanese Army troops replace the Syrians only in Christian East Beirut, arguing that this would undermine Syria's image as an impartial peacekeeping force. The Syrians have warned Sarkis that, if he asks them to withdraw from one area of the country, they will pull out altogether. Most Lebanese Muslims and Palestinians oppose the stationing of units of the predominantly Christian Lebanese Army in Muslim West Beirut. [redacted]

USSR: Reaction to Camp David

[redacted] Soviet President Brezhnev in a speech in Baku yesterday firmly rejected the Camp David agreements, but stopped short of other inflammatory charges that Soviet media have recently raised against US Middle Eastern policy. In choosing to emphasize the points he did, however, Brezhnev gave no indication the USSR feels that either the tone or the substance of bilateral relations has improved in recent weeks.

[redacted] The Soviet leader called the Camp David agreements a "new anti-Arab deal" between Israel and Egypt that has active US participation, and maintained that such attempts can only make the situation in the Middle East even more explosive. Although Brezhnev did not specifically mention Geneva, he recited the standard Soviet argument that there is only one true path to a final settlement and called for the participation of all interested parties--including the Palestine Liberation Organization--in any settlement.

[redacted] Implicitly criticizing Secretary Vance's tour of the Middle East, Brezhnev referred to attempts to compel other participants in the conflict to succumb to the terms of the agreements. *Pravda*, the Soviet party daily, yesterday went even further, saying the Secretary was putting "strong pressure" on

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[redacted]

King Hussein. Apparently referring to Jordanian and Saudi statements and to the meeting of the Arab Steadfastness Front in Damascus, Brezhnev said Vance's mission would not be easy. He did not, however, raise the charge that the US wants to insert its own forces into the region as recent Soviet commentary has alleged.

[redacted] Brezhnev's comments on bilateral relations conveyed a sense of continuing chill and placed the blame wholly on the US. On SALT, Brezhnev asserted that differences are "quite surmountable" and implied that a US lack of good will is all that has prevented agreement.

[redacted] The statements on SALT are consistent with Soviet public commentary this year, which has balanced a willingness to conclude an agreement with a somber assessment of US intentions. Brezhnev's statements yesterday are similar to those in his speeches in April when he expressed skepticism about US motives. Thus, Brezhnev is now less optimistic in public concerning SALT than he was in an interview last December in *Pravda*, when he described the prospects for an agreement as favorable.

[redacted] Brezhnev never referred specifically to US-China policy. The absence of a direct attack on "playing the China card" suggests the Soviets recognize that further belaboring of this point in public only serves to underscore Soviet ineffectiveness.

[redacted] Brezhnev also assailed US criticism of recent Soviet trials of dissidents, US newsmen, and International Harvester official Crawford. He defended Soviet courts for combatting unlawful activities, and asserted that the subsequent "loud propaganda campaign" in the US was a "flagrant violation" of the Helsinki agreements. [redacted]

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