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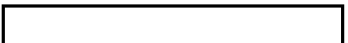
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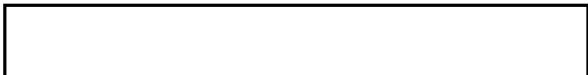
National Intelligence Bulletin

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December 22, 1975



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LEBANON

Syrian army chief of staff Shihabi returned home from Beirut on Saturday after two days of talks with the principal Lebanese and Palestinian political leaders.

While in Beirut, Shihabi publicly credited right-wing Phalanges Party leader Jumayyil with being "prepared to find a solution to all aspects of the Lebanese crisis." Shihabi's visit may have been aimed mainly at pressing leftist leader Jumblatt to temper his political demands and to cooperate with Prime Minister Karami in forming a new cabinet.

On Friday, Jumblatt announced that Lebanon was "at the beginning" of a political settlement that could take two or three months to implement. Ambiguous though it was, this was his most optimistic statement in several weeks. So far, he has not directly blamed Lebanese Christians for the assassination on Saturday of Tripoli Governor Qassim Al Imad. Al Imad, a civil servant, generally shared Jumblatt's leftist views and, like Jumblatt, was a Druze.

For the present, Druze, Muslim, and Christian leaders are blaming the slaying on unidentified individuals who want to perpetuate the fighting. Interior Minister Shamun claims to have evidence that radicals who in the past have used sniping attacks to spark a resumption of general hostilities are now preparing a series of political assassinations.

The Syrians may be attempting to persuade Jumblatt to endorse the terms of an agreement that was reached during Jumayyil's visit to Damascus early this month. That plan reportedly provides for:

- implementation of an effective cease-fire;
- expansion of the cabinet to include representatives of Jumayyil and Jumblatt;
- agreement to minor, largely cosmetic political changes while President Franjiyah is in office;
- negotiations on more fundamental reforms after a new president is elected next August.

Lebanese Christians probably would accept these proposals on the theory that they would bring immediate peace and allow time to qualify or back away from the pledge to negotiate fundamental changes in the country's system of government. Jumblatt and other leftists are reluctant to give up anything in return for mere promises of reform. They, too, have suffered heavy casualties in the fighting this year, however, and may now be convinced that Franjiyah is not likely to resign or make significant concessions before his term expires.

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[redacted]
 [redacted] Qulaylat's headquarters on
 Saturday issued a statement saying that the Lebanese crisis can be solved only "by
 the political process." [redacted]

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ARGENTINA

The rebellion of dissident air force officers calling for the ouster of President Maria Estela Peron is apparently all but over. Peron remains in office for the moment, but her hold is tenuous at best.

The rebellious air force officers failed in their repeated attempts to enlist the support of the other services and support elsewhere in the air force was only lukewarm. One army general who pronounced himself "in rebellion" has been dismissed. At no time was the rebels' position very strong; they have had virtually no firepower at their disposal. As negotiations proceeded yesterday, there was no renewal of Saturday's bombing and strafing of the rebel stronghold.

President Peron, facing the most serious challenge yet to her authority, reacted in her usual fashion. Her office issued defiant statements of her refusal to step down; she remained, for the most part, secluded with a handful of supporters. Once again she was reported ill.

Top officers of the three armed services are working hard to ease the strains the rebellion has placed on the unity of the military. The air force move apparently surprised most officers in the other services.

[redacted]

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The dissidents demanded not only the overthrow of Peron, but also the installation of an all-military regime.

[redacted]

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Another presidential leave of absence or Peron's outright resignation could suffice. In either case, Senate president Italo Luder, who successfully administered the government several months ago in Peron's absence, would be likely to take over.

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USSR-ANGOLA

Moscow is continuing its propaganda campaign against the US on the issue of Angola.

Soviet media are giving heavy play to US Congressional deliberations on Angola and are focusing particular attention on expressions of concern in the US that Washington might be drawn into another Vietnam-like situation. The media have predictably applauded the US Senate's decision to block any new US aid for the Angolan factions opposing the Soviet-backed Popular Movement.

Reaction to President Ford's weekend public statements on Angola has been sparse. Radio Moscow termed the President's remarks on Soviet policy toward Angola "unfriendly" and avoided comment on his references to Cuban activity. Late last week, a *Pravda* correspondent directly linked a battlefield atrocity he allegedly had witnessed recently east of Luanda to his claim that US Vietnam war veterans are being recruited in California "to commit new My Lais" on Angolan soil.

Recent Soviet commentaries have also blasted the Chinese for "teaming up with the most rabid forces of international reaction" in Angola and for allegedly providing "massive" military and financial assistance to "pro-imperialist, pro-racist forces" operating there. For its part, Peking, in a *People's Daily* article last Friday, denounced the Soviets as "outrageous meddlers" in Angola bent on undermining African unity and plundering the continent's vast resources.

Despite Moscow's harsh rhetoric on Angola and the absence of any visible sign of lagging in its support for the Popular Movement, there may be some flexibility in the Soviet position. On December 19, for example, a *Pravda* article signed by "Observer"—indicating top-level Kremlin endorsement—spoke in positive terms of UN and Organization of African Unity deliberations on Angola. The article seemed to imply that Moscow may now place more importance on African participation in a negotiated solution of the Angolan conflict.

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MALTA

Prime Minister Mintoff has been talking with various West European leaders in his search for money to replace the \$35 million in base rental payments Malta will lose when the UK withdraws its forces.

The British, who maintain troops in Malta, will begin to phase them out in 1977 and will complete their withdrawal in 1979. The success of Mintoff's efforts to secure financial commitments in advance of the troops' departure will be a major issue in the parliamentary election next year. Mintoff met recently with officials in Paris, Bonn, and London to discuss Malta's future after the British leave. In each capital, Mintoff made a strong pitch for increased economic assistance.

The Prime Minister received the most heartening news in Paris, where he was told that the French had decided to end their objection to a new EC-Malta association agreement. The French decision clears the way for approval of an increase in EC aid to Malta from about \$25 million to some \$31 million over a five-year period. Paris had opposed the agreement on grounds that the aid earmarked for Malta would exceed that given to other Mediterranean countries.

During Italian President Leone's state visit to Malta earlier this month, Mintoff tried unsuccessfully to persuade Leone to help solve Malta's economic problems through an agreement between Libya and Italy by which Italian technical experts would be joined with Libyan capital to industrialize the island. The Prime Minister asserted that the Libyans are prepared to invest "great sums" in Malta. Leone responded that any Italian actions to help would be taken in consultation with Rome's NATO allies.

Mintoff knows that the opposition Nationalists would be able to exploit any loss in Maltese income in the next election, which must be held by the fall of 1976. Inflation and unemployment have already reached serious levels, and Mintoff has not been very successful in attracting job-producing foreign investment.



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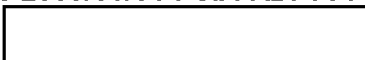
FOR THE RECORD

CUBA: A massive rally is to be held in Havana this afternoon, ostensibly to give the Cuban people the opportunity to approve the decisions and programs emanating from the Cuban Communist Party's first congress. The six-day congress, which ends today, has been held under the tightest security Cuba has ever experienced. At the congress, delegates unanimously approved new party statutes, the reorganization of Cuba's administrative divisions, a five-year economic plan, party First Secretary Fidel Castro's main report, the party platform, and a new constitution that is to be submitted to a referendum on February 15. Castro is likely to use today's mass gathering to present the new party Central Committee to the people, to tell the people more about Cuba's military involvement in Angola, and to reply to President Ford's remarks last Saturday on Cuban-US relations.



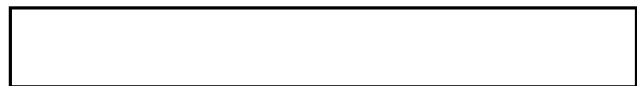
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USSR-SOMALIA: Somalia has received its second Soviet-built Osa-II class large guided-missile patrol boat, and a third should arrive later this week. The icebreaker tug that towed the patrol boat from the Black Sea via the Suez Canal arrived off Berbera yesterday.



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