

Top Secret 219

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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Tuesday 11 July 1978 CG NIDC 78/160C

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NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION
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State Dept. review completed

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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Tuesday, 11 July 1978.

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The NID Cable is for the purpose of informing senior US officials.

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Bulgaria

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MAURITANIA: Coup Leaders' Policies

25X1 [] *The military officers who overthrew the Mauritanian Government of Moktar Ould Daddah yesterday appear to be political centrists or conservatives friendly to the West, and especially to the French. The apparent leader of the "national military rehabilitation committee" that has seized control is Lt. Col. Moustapha Ould Mohamed Salek, chief of staff of the Mauritanian Armed Forces.*

25X1 [] The backgrounds of the coup leaders and statements by spokesmen for the new regime suggest that the change of government in Nouakchott probably will not alter the prosecution of the conflict with the Polisario Front guerrillas or affect military cooperation with Morocco.

25X1 [] In a conversation with US Ambassador Kryza, a high-level Mauritanian administrator who claims that he is close to the military junta stated that the new government will move away from a state-controlled economy.

25X1 [] //It now appears that the coup may have been an outgrowth of a struggle between conservative and progressive factions in the ruling Mauritanian People's Party. The progressives, led by the wife of President Ould Daddah, had been pushing an anti-corruption campaign apparently aimed at purging conservatives from the government. The government's inability to solve the serious economic problems that had brought the country to the edge of bankruptcy may also have motivated the coup leaders.//

25X1 [] //Although the Mauritanian armed forces recently have suffered reverses in clashes with Polisario Front guerrillas, the military committee's statement that it had acted to save the country from dismemberment seems to preclude any accommodation with the Front that would relinquish control over that part of Western Sahara claimed by Mauritania.//

25X1 [] //There is no evidence that Morocco was involved in or even aware of the move against Ould Daddah's government. The Moroccans, who have over 8,000 men in Mauritania, have expressed concern over the change of government, but it is unlikely there will be any change in the military relationship between the two countries. //Both sides recognize that it would

25X1 be extremely difficult to prosecute the war against the guerrillas single-handed. A mutual defense agreement was signed in May last year, and military cooperation since then has been good. [redacted]

LEBANON: Syrian Intentions

25X1 [redacted] *Syrian President Assad is searching for a formula to calm the situation in Lebanon while preparing for another round of fighting if the Syrians cannot reach a compromise with the Christian militia leaders. Christian leaders seem to be taking a less uncompromising line than they had earlier. The truce in Beirut continues to hold.*

25X1 [redacted] The nominal Lebanese commander of the Arab peacekeeping forces told US officials in Beirut yesterday that the Syrians have not posed any conditions for an end to the fighting and that they are willing to withdraw from positions in the Christian areas if a face-saving formula can be negotiated.

[redacted]

25X1 The US Embassy in Damascus reports that Syrian military leaders appear to be trying to project the idea at home that no military confrontation is in the offing.

25X1 [redacted] //According to the Israeli press, the Israelis have sent reinforcements to the border area, and the US defense attache in Tel Aviv noted some minor augmentation of Israeli forces. There is no indication of large-scale Israeli troop movements.//

25X1 [redacted] If the Christians are less aggressive than in the early days of the crisis, it may indicate that they have heeded Israeli counsels of restraint. The Christians' eagerness to take on the Syrians was based on their conviction that the Israelis were prepared to give them extensive support and perhaps even intervene on the ground--a conviction that the Israelis' sending jet fighters over Beirut intensified. If the Israelis have succeeded in disabusing the Christians of this notion, it could go a long way to restrain the hotheads. [redacted]

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NORTH YEMEN: Political Maneuver

25X1 [redacted] *Ali Abdallah Salih, a member of North Yemen's Presidential Council and Deputy Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, has emerged as the regime's strongman and appears to be making a bid for the presidency. Salih enjoys the support of Saudi Arabia, is basically pro-West, but has a reputation as an adventurer.*

25X1 [redacted] *Salih apparently intends to take over as both President and head of the armed forces in the near future.*

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25X1 [redacted] *Salih has demonstrated his growing power by forcing several prominent adversaries to leave the country. Saudi Arabia, which has extensive influence in North Yemen, appears to want Salih as the country's strongman and presumably would support him if he makes a move to claim the presidency.*

25X1 [redacted] *Critics of Salih include some military leaders and Abdallah al-Ahmar, North Yemen's most prominent northern tribal leader, who is also a Saudi client. His detractors assert that Salih is unintelligent and immature and is not presidential timber.*

25X1 [redacted] *Salih nonetheless is apparently taking a realistic view of his country's dispute with South Yemen.*

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25X1 [redacted] *It is uncertain when Salih might press his bid for the presidency and what opposition he will meet when he does. Although he could force the issue in the near term, Salih might be content to wait until President Arashi resigns, at which time Salih would attempt to have himself proclaimed President. Arashi is reported to have indicated he will step aside by early August.*

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USSR - EASTERN EUROPE: Crops

25X1 [] We now estimate that the USSR will harvest 215 million tons of grain this year, up almost 20 million tons from the 1977 crop and only 5 million tons shy of the 1978 Plan. The estimate is the same as that released by the US Department of Agriculture late yesterday. Prospects for grain production in Eastern Europe also appear good, with a near-record crop of 93 million tons now forecast. The outlook for other crops--especially potatoes and sugar beets--in both the USSR and Eastern Europe is less favorable.

25X1 [] Even with the improved harvest, the USSR could purchase about 15 million tons of grain abroad for delivery during the coming marketing year. Market sources indicate that Moscow may do some buying this month; to date the USSR has ordered only about 1 million tons of US grain.

25X1 [] If favorable weather holds, we expect the USSR's winter grain harvest to reach a near-record 62 million tons, although late-season hail or poor harvesting weather could affect both the size and the quality of the crop. Recent observations by the USDA's Winter Wheat Team support this assessment.

25X1 [] //Based on this year's above-normal soil moisture reserves, spring grain production is forecast at 153 million tons--a level exceeded by the Soviets only twice before--but the outlook could change markedly. Fields in the European USSR are excessively weedy, and east of the Urals crop development is slower than normal, the result of delayed seeding and the cool weather. Yields could be cut by an abnormally hot summer or by frost during delayed fall harvesting operations.//

25X1 [] Conditions for the major non-grain crops are not as favorable. Weeds have interfered with plant growth, thinning of sugar beets is reportedly behind schedule, and crop disease has been reported.

25X1 [] Crops sown last fall in Eastern Europe survived the winter in good shape, and this spring's cool, wet weather--except in the northern part of East Germany and in northwestern Poland--has favored plant growth. The above-normal precipitation has, however, leached nutrients from the soil, at least in Poland; and weeds, disease, and pests are common. []

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SPAIN: Violence in Pamplona

25X1 [] *Tension is once again rising in Spain's troubled Basque region. If extremists there have their way, they will initiate a new cycle of violence that will place severe strains on the government and jeopardize a national consensus on the new Spanish constitution.*

25X1 [] During the past three months, the leftist Basque Fatherland and Liberty terrorist organization, in a last-ditch bid to foil the government's plan to reduce tension by granting limited autonomy, has stepped up attacks on policemen and political opponents. The terrorists may have triggered a resurgence of rightist counterterrorist organizations.

25X1 [] The violence in Pamplona that resulted in the death of a leftist militant last weekend was the latest manifestation of the political tension that exists in the north. The city is the capital of the northern province of Navarra, where the people are evenly divided between Basques, who hope Navarra will be incorporated in a larger autonomous Basque region, and non-Basques who wish Navarra to remain a separate province. The nationalists apparently hope that stirring up police repression will drive more people over to their side.

25X1 [] The nationalists apparently hope to stir up popular feeling throughout the Basque region against the draft Spanish constitution, which would permit only limited regional autonomy. Extremists will not be satisfied with anything short of complete independence, and more moderate nationalists--who are still in the majority--may find it politically impossible to accept the constitution unless the government makes clear concessions to them on the autonomy issue.

25X1 [] The government is responding cautiously. Tough new antiterrorist measures came into effect on 1 July, but they are similar to previous measures that did little to deter the terrorists. Madrid is also planning to introduce a Special Operations Group of elite national police modeled on other West European antiterrorist forces.

25X1 [] The root of the public order problem in the Basque country, however, lies in the mutual hatred that developed during the Franco years between Basques and the national police. As long as Madrid's police are stationed in the Basque country, they will provide targets for terrorist attacks.

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[redacted] So far, the Spanish military--still deeply suspicious of the Basques, who were among Franco's bitterest enemies--has probably been the main stumbling block to the establishment of a local police force. The new constitution, which is likely to be approved by parliament this month and ratified by referendum early this fall, may provide the government with the mandate it needs to create one. [redacted]

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NIGERIA: Political Activity

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[redacted] Rumors of coup plotting by middle-grade officers who wish to prevent a scheduled return to civilian rule next year are circulating widely among civilians in Nigeria. We have no firm evidence Nigerian officers are planning a coup and believe the odds still favor a successful transition to civilian rule. A coup attempt by some disgruntled officers, however, is always a possibility. The government discovered two coup plots in March.

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[redacted] Head of State Obasanjo, aware of the coup rumors, last week appealed to the military to "keep our heads and pledge" to facilitate a smooth transition to civilian rule in 1979. We have no indications that Obasanjo or other key members of the ruling military council have reservations about returning to civilian rule.

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[redacted] The government remains suspicious of lower level officers and feels under pressure to reward them with promotions and opportunities to serve in government posts. Approximately 30 junior officers were recently promoted and some middle-grade officers will be elevated soon.

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[redacted] Aspiring politicians and the press are calling for legalization of political activity on 29 July, the third anniversary of Obasanjo's government.

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[redacted] Coup rumors are circulating in part because civilian politicians are concerned that middle-grade officers want to continue military rule so they can receive a share of power and wealth. Many civilians fear would-be plotters could attempt to justify a coup by citing the tensions that exist between the northern and southern parts of the country. These tensions have been exacerbated by the constituent assembly's decision

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to delete a constitutional provision for a federal Islamic court of appeals. The government's discovery of the coup plots in March sharpened the civilians' fears.

25X1 [] To avoid giving a pretext for a coup, Nigerian politicians may exercise restraint when open politicking is allowed. Rekindled ethnic tensions and the country's economic problems have led to a growing pessimism among the general public that civilian government will work. The idea of continued military rule is probably now somewhat less unpalatable to concerned Nigerians than it was a year ago. Even so, the civilian elite is determined to achieve power, and potential plotters will have to take this into account in considering a coup. []

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CHINA: Information Retrieval

25X1 [] *China apparently has selected a US firm to supply equipment for a national computerized data network for scientific and technical information--a top priority project in the Chinese effort to enhance scientific development. The US and COCOM will have to approve the export of the equipment.*

25X1 [] The Chinese signed contracts on 14 June with Sperry Univac for two 1100 Series computer systems valued at more than \$6 million. The Peking Institute of Science and Technology apparently plans to use a Univac 1100/11 computer. The "Peking Document Service" allegedly hopes to use a Univac 1100/12 multiprocessor system--two computers linked in tandem--as part of a national information retrieval system on technical publications.

25X1 [] // "Peking Document Service" apparently is a new term referring to the main repositories of scientific and technical information in the Peking area, including the libraries of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and a number of research institutes.// Its proposed retrieval system would be accessible to scientific and technical research centers nationwide; the high-speed data transmission network would utilize existing telecommunication circuits.

25X1 [] China's lack of an adequate mechanism for information dissemination and exchange has been a major obstacle to its scientific advancement. Many of China's scientific centers

conduct research nearly autonomously, and institutes working on similar projects have not usually exchanged information. The proposed information network would provide technicians with direct access to some of the latest Western scientific and technical data as well as Chinese research studies.

25X1 [redacted] The Univac computer systems will require both US and COCOM approval for export and will pose a difficult problem for licensing officials. The 1100/12 would be by far the highest performance system ever approved for any Communist country.

25X1 [redacted]
UN: Committee on Disarmament

25X1 [redacted] //The Conference of the Committee on Disarmament convenes today in Geneva for a final session before it is re-constituted as an expanded Committee on Disarmament. Much of the committee's attention will focus on the arms control talks that the nuclear powers have been holding, particularly the US-Soviet-British negotiations on a comprehensive test ban treaty. The delegates will also discuss selecting members for the expanded committee.//

25X1 [redacted] //To contribute to verification of a test ban, the committee has established an ad hoc group of seismic experts to study the feasibility of testing an international seismic data exchange system. Some committee members want to proceed with this experiment, but the USSR has so far refused to agree to anything more than further study. France does not wish to discuss a nuclear test ban and will probably not participate in the committee's final session.//

25X1 [redacted] //The Soviets will likely push their draft treaty, introduced during the committee's previous session, that calls for outlawing the production, stockpiling, and use of "nuclear neutron weapons." They may also press their proposal to establish a group of experts to consider the control of new weapons of mass destruction.//

25X1 [redacted] //A separate working group will begin to negotiate a comprehensive program of disarmament. The group had delayed its substantive work pending the results of the UN Special Session on Disarmament.//

25X1 [redacted] //The UN Special Session approved a decision that the new committee, scheduled to meet no later than January 1979, should include states that have nuclear weapons and from 32 to 35 other countries chosen in consultation with UN General Assembly President Moysov. The new committee will thus have representatives from an additional five to eight nonnuclear states. Moysov has indicated his intention to let the nuclear weapons states take the lead in the selection process. The British want to begin this process with US-Soviet-British consultations and later to form a contact group with selected nonaligned representatives.//

25X1 [redacted] //There are already more candidates for the committee than there are seats available, even if one or two of the least active members of the present committee are dropped. Australia is the Western state most likely to win one of the added seats. The chief nonaligned candidates are Algeria, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka. [redacted]

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BRIEF

Bulgaria

25X1 [redacted] Hailstorms and flooding that damaged some 15 percent of Bulgaria's agricultural acreage could cause serious food shortages this year and exacerbate existing consumer dissatisfaction. Worker unrest in recent months is said to have been caused by anger over such shortages and the generally low level of living. Even before the recent damage, Bulgarian officials expressed concern over panic buying and hoarding of foodstuffs and rumors of impending price increases.

25X1 [redacted] The wide-scale damage suffered by croplands and vineyards throughout the country will probably have an adverse effect on Bulgaria's foodstuff exports, a major hard currency earner. A drop in agricultural production last year caused the government to fire numerous top officials, including the Minister of Agriculture. [redacted]

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