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The President's Daily Brief

13 August 1971

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Border clashes have caused a rupture in Syria's relations with Jordan. (Page 1)

Syria is evidently attempting to play a mediatory role between Sudan and the USSR. (Page 2)

Soviets [redacted] (Page 3)

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South Korea [redacted] Chinese Communists. (Page 4)

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Mintoff is still not satisfied, but London's more conciliatory approach may bring agreement. (Page 5)

Bahrain's ruler says he will end his special protected relationship with the UK tomorrow and seek UN membership. (Page 5)

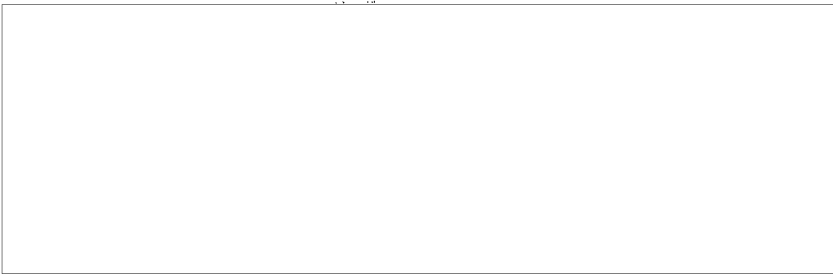
The Arab Federation planning meeting has been rescheduled for 18 August and may include Numayri. (Page 5)

The recent burning of a major opium refinery in Laos apparently was a ruse. (Page 5)

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SYRIA-JORDAN

Cross-border clashes have prompted Syria to break relations with Jordan and to close its air space to Jordanian planes. The Syrians charge that a small Jordanian patrol--two tracked vehicles and one jeep--crossed less than a mile into Syrian territory on Wednesday and killed a Syrian at an observation post. Troops also traded fire across the border yesterday.



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Incidents across the border are frequent. Units of the Palestine Liberation Army are regularly stationed near the Syrian border town of Daraa, and some Syrian Army units were moved to the border area last month, possibly to keep the fedayeen troops under control. On their side, the Jordanians have concentrated troops as a defense against fedayeen incursions. Fedayeen firing across the border has been met by Jordanian reprisal shellings and each side has strayed into the other's territory on occasion.

Syria's motives for publicizing the recent incidents and citing them as a pretext for stern measures against Jordan are unclear. Damascus may be trying to refurbish its pro-Palestinian image, which has been tarnished by its quiet cooperation with Jordan in restraining the fedayeen.

The Syrians may also be hoping to one-up the Egyptians. An Egyptian-Saudi negotiating team is now in Amman with a peace plan--blessed by Cairo--that would give the fedayeen virtually nothing, although paying lip service to previous agreements "guaranteeing" them some freedom of activity.

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SYRIA-USSR-SUDAN

The Syrian vice president and foreign minister arrived in Khartoum on 11 August after spending two days in the USSR. While in Moscow, the Syrians met with Acting Foreign Minister Kuznetsov and with a high-ranking Soviet party official responsible for relations with the nonruling Communist parties abroad.

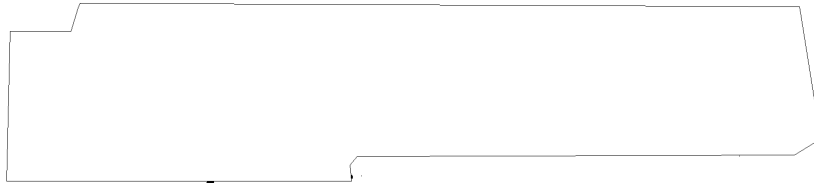
The timing of the visits strongly suggests that the Syrians are trying--at Moscow's behest--to ease the tensions that have disrupted Soviet-Sudanese relations and damaged the Soviet image throughout the Middle East.

Sensitive about the Syrian visit, Numayri has publicly denied that it constitutes "mediation" between his government and Moscow. After yesterday's discussions, however, the Sudanese deputy premier said that Khartoum is "prepared to take positive steps" to improve relations with the USSR and praised Soviet support for the Arabs against Israel.

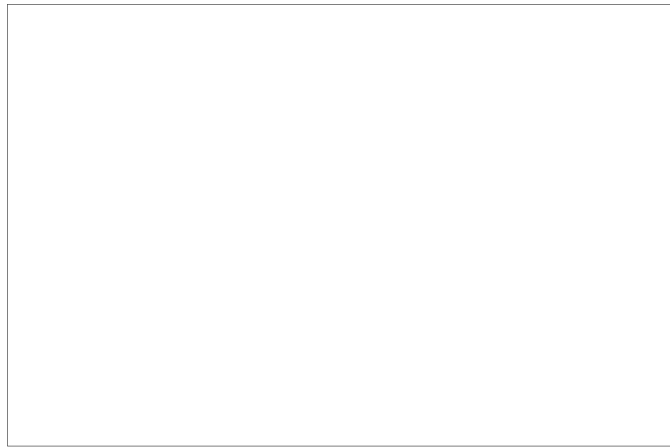
A Soviet Government minister in Moscow recently told an Arab visitor that the USSR is also looking to Egypt to help Moscow with its problem in the Sudan. Apparently in response, the Egyptian press has put emphasis on the theme that Soviet-Sudanese tensions can only divide the Arab world and bring about a reduction of Soviet aid.

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USSR



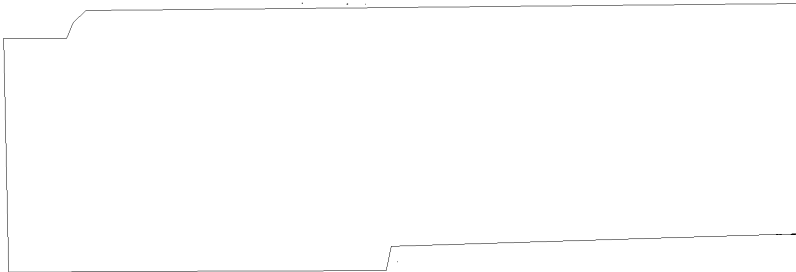
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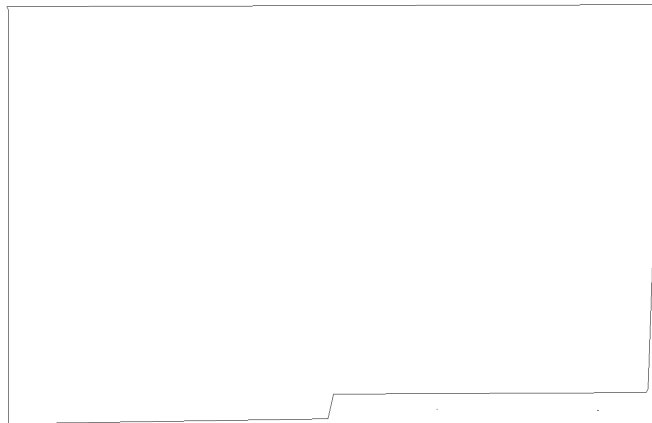
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SOUTH KOREA - COMMUNIST CHINA



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Sheikhdom of BAHRAIN

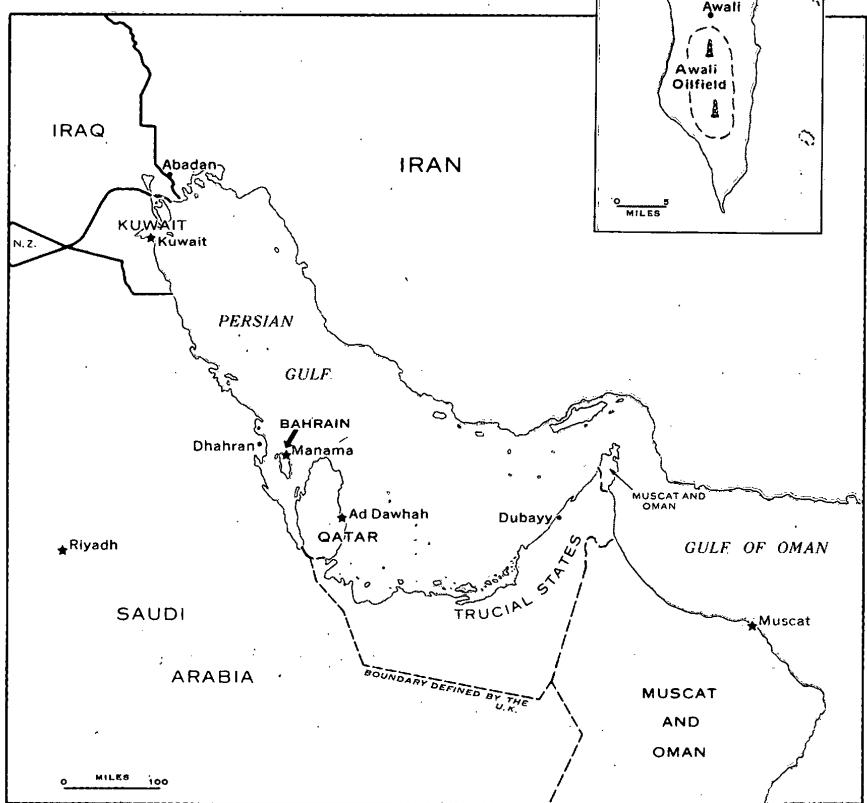
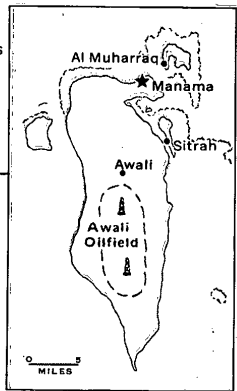
Area: 230 sq. miles
 plus group of smaller islands

Population: 210,000

Religion: Muslim

Language: Arabic

Government leader: Sheikh Isa



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NOTES

Malta-UK: Mintoff is still not satisfied, but London's more conciliatory approach and its offer of an emergency cash payment tied only to a pledge to negotiate "in good faith" may bring him around. Another factor favoring an agreement is Mintoff's lack of a ready alternative. The Libyans have apparently proved to be tough bargainers and the Soviets presumably would be reluctant to take on the large financial commitment Malta is demanding from the West. The Soviets, however, have made a friendly gesture to Mintoff by offering to repair several merchant ships in Maltese drydocks this year.

Bahrain: The ruler of Bahrain has informed London that he intends to end his special protected relationship with the UK tomorrow and to apply for UN membership. Bahrain has been toying with a declaration of independence since June, but it has hesitated to take the plunge because of Saudi Arabia's refusal to acquiesce. King Faysal--the patriarch of the Arabian peninsular states--has no direct way to block Bahraini independence, but his indirect influence on the tiny sheikhdoms of the area is already strong and will become even more so after the British withdrawal, which is to take place before the end of this year. Concern over what Faysal might do could cause the Bahrainis to reverse or defer their decision.

Arab Federation: The planning meeting of the proposed federation, which had been scheduled to convene in Damascus yesterday, was put off at the last minute until 18 August. Sadat, Qadhafi, and Asad will lead their respective delegations. Contrary to earlier indications, it now appears that Khartoum will send a high-level group to the planning meeting, possibly including Numayri.

Laos: That major opium refinery deliberately destroyed in northwest Laos last month (see The President's Daily Brief of 27 July) was apparently burned as a ruse by operators who anticipated a Lao Government crackdown. Opium operations have since begun at a new facility nearby. Former Lao armed forces chief General Ouan Rathikoun remains deeply involved in the opium operations in this area. He is said to have tipped off smugglers to the government's suppressive plans. Other Vientiane authorities seem to be trying to gain greater controls over the ethnic Chinese in northwest Laos, some of whom are engaged in the narcotics trade.

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