



The President's Daily Brief



16 February 1972

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Cypriot President Makarios is standing his ground against Greek demands amid indications that Athens may be considering more forceful action. (Page 1)

The military situation in northern Laos is discussed on Page 2.

[Redacted] Cambodia [Redacted] (Page 3)

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President Numayri's dismissal of his pro-Egyptian defense minister has further strained Sudan's relations with Egypt. (Page 4)

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[Redacted] (Page 5)

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The military has seized power in Ecuador. (Page 6)

At Annex, we discuss Sudan's efforts to promote a settlement in the Middle East. [Redacted]

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CYPRUS

Athens is still pressing its demands that President Makarios turn over the Czech arms to the UN peacekeeping forces and broaden his government. The Greeks apparently believed that political pressure would convince Makarios to capitulate. Makarios, however, is standing his ground and there are some indications that Athens may now be considering more forceful action.

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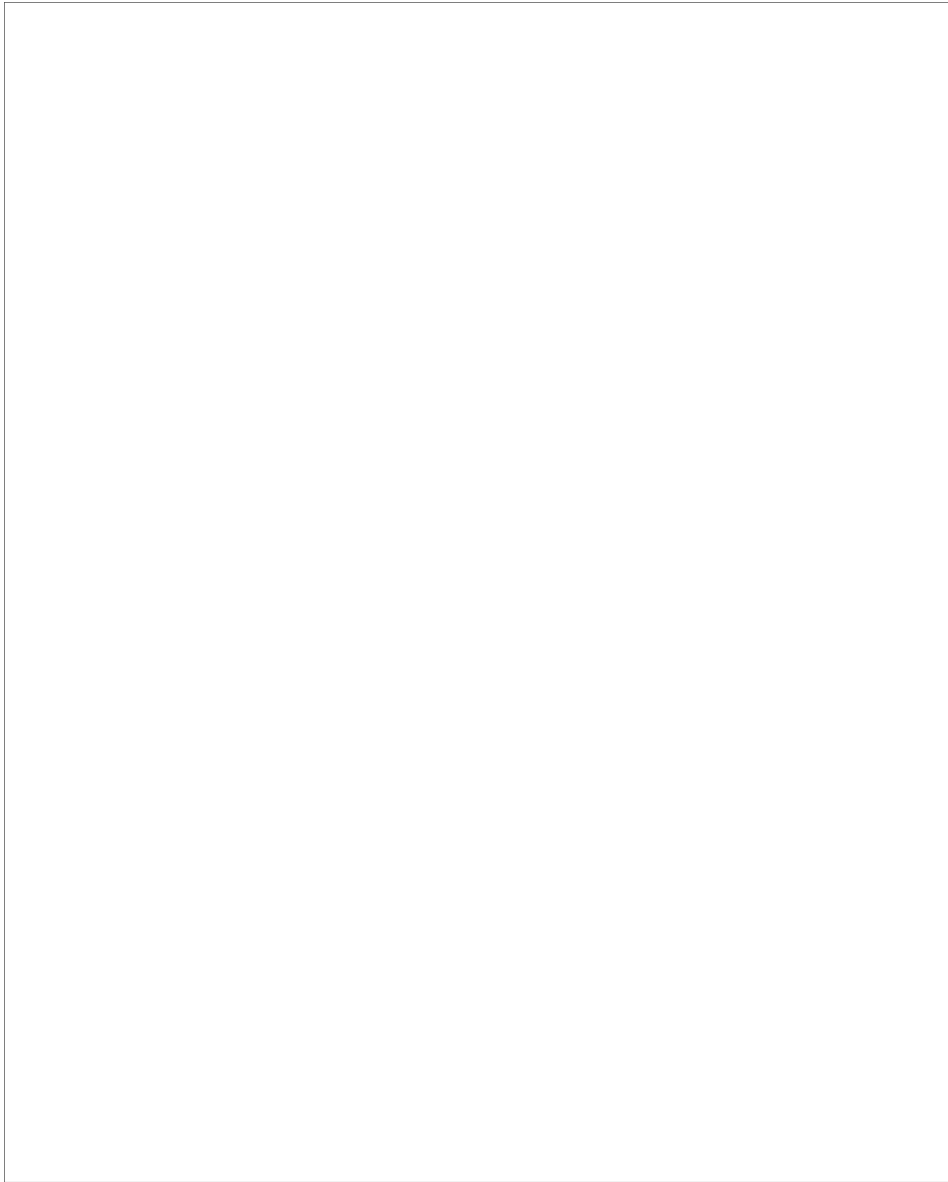
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Makarios, for his part, has been active rallying support. A large pro-Makarios demonstration took place yesterday in Nicosia, apparently at his direction.

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LAOS

Yesterday Vang Pao's irregular units advancing north from Pha Dong reported several clashes with enemy patrols as they attempted to move toward Route 4. Another irregular force holding a 105-mm. howitzer position at Phou Khe has been shelled for the past three days but has suffered little damage. The majority of the irregular force is located in the foothills at the southeastern tip of the Plaine. Vang Pao has also launched yet another diversionary operation from the Bouam Long area north of the Plaine south toward Route 7.

The North Vietnamese have shifted additional forces from Long Tieng to protect their rear areas. Last week elements of the 148th Regiment moved from Long Tieng to positions southeast of the Plaine. More recent intercepts indicate that much of the 174th Regiment, which had been active near Sam Thong, has been ordered to take up positions on high points near Route 4 and Phou Khe.

Five other North Vietnamese regiments remain in the Long Tieng - Sam Thong area, and recent messages indicate that they are continuing to prepare for new attacks. Rear service units are pushing supplies to front-line units, and trucks are now using the new road from the southern Plaine to Ban Hintang.

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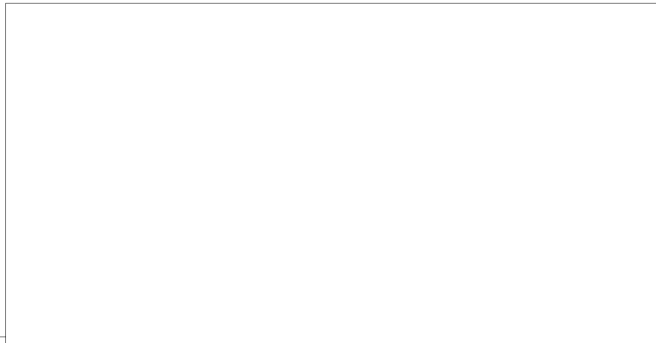
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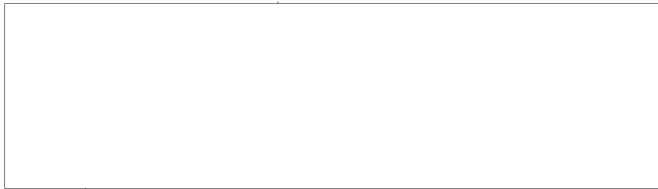
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SUDAN-EGYPT

President Numayri's dismissal Sunday of his pro-Egyptian defense minister, Khalid Hassan Abbas, has brought a sharp reaction from Cairo. Claiming that an "atmosphere of crisis" prevails in Khartoum, President Sadat dispatched Foreign Minister Ghalib to Sudan on Monday to deliver an "urgent" message to Numayri. Ghalib's message included hints of Egyptian countermoves, according to press reports.

Numayri's removal of Abbas is but the latest example of friction between Sudan and Egypt in recent months. Cairo is annoyed with Numayri's refusal to balance his overtures to the West with friendly gestures toward Moscow and with his postponement of Sudan's adherence to the Confederation of Arab Republics. Cairo views this behavior as a sign that Sudan is detaching itself from Arab affairs and problems.

The Egyptians are likely to continue their pressure tactics against Numayri. Cairo, for example, may have been behind the resignation yesterday of the head of the Sudan Socialist Union, an ally of the deposed Abbas.

Khartoum, meanwhile, remains calm and Numayri appears to be in full control. He apparently believes he has strong domestic support for his "Sudan first" policy.

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NOTES

Bangladesh: Newsmen and a representative of the UN who visited the Bihari enclave of Mirpur near Dacca report hunger but no starvation there. The government is now letting in food supplies, and there have been no Bengali-Bihari clashes since the beginning of the month. The Biharis, nevertheless, remain depressed over their bleak prospects, and many of them would like to leave the country. Indian Foreign Secretary Kaul, however, has told Ambassador Keating that India will not accept the Biharis--who are Muslims--because of the possible conflicts with Hindus, and Islamabad has indicated it does not want them.

Ecuador: President Velasco has been ousted by the military led by Army Commander General Rodriguez. The move was taken to prevent populist politician Assad Bucaram from winning the June presidential election. The armed forces proclaimed a state of siege throughout the country and announced a curfew, but there have been no reports of bloodshed. According to a decree issued this morning General Rodriguez will be supported by a government council composed of a new army commander and the navy and air force commanders. The new regime is describing itself as "nationalist, military and revolutionary"--most likely in an effort to co-opt some of Bucaram's support among the younger officers. The military last ruled Ecuador from 1963 to 1966. Velasco, who successfully completed only one of his five presidential terms, has gone into exile in Panama. Bucaram may also be forced to leave the country.

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SUDAN-LIBYA-EGYPT

One of the more unlikely proposals made in recent weeks has been Sudanese President Numayri's idea that the US enlist Libyan President Qadhafi's support for Egyptian-Israeli proximity talks. Qadhafi has rarely given even lip service to the idea of negotiating the unfinished Arab-Israeli war, and Numayri's suggestion seemed to be his own brainstorm rather than a product of his discussions with Qadhafi. However, a re-examination of Qadhafi's recent statements and published Libyan views suggests that his and Numayri's distrust of Soviet influence in Egypt may be leading both of them to revise their priorities.

Numayri told Ambassador Bush on 5 February that he believed the US should use Libya, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait to persuade President Sadat to take Egypt into the interim agreement talks. Sadat cannot make the decision on his own, Numayri said, but could be given the necessary push if these three countries--the aid givers--indicated their support of proximity talks. Numayri offered Sudan's own support for any US initiative that did not embarrass or weaken Egypt and urged an immediate US contact with Qadhafi.

The Sudanese suggestion to Ambassador Bush came only a few days after Qadhafi's talks with Sadat and Numayri. The Sudanese minister of information, who had attended the Numayri-Qadhafi talks, later told Bush that Qadhafi was so worried about massive Soviet influence in Egypt that he would probably be willing to weigh in with Sadat.

While there may be considerable exaggeration in these Sudanese allegations about Qadhafi's views, they can be fitted into the trend of his recent statements. Addressing Egyptian troops at Aswan last month, Qadhafi repeated his customary line that the "battle" with Israel was inevitable but went on to insist that the timing must be left to the "political leadership." This argument, which supports Sadat's position, has been repeated in Libya's armed forces journal, which sometimes serves as Qadhafi's personal mouthpiece. Other themes he has struck in recent months include the inability of the Arab armies to defeat Israel now and the folly of starting hostilities without adequate planning and training. Over the same period, he has expressed concern about the spread of Soviet "imperialism" in the Middle East in several widely publicized speeches and interviews.

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If Qadhafi now views the confrontation with Israel as a protracted struggle which needs careful preparation, he may also see some utility in proceeding with talks for an interim agreement. He may have come to believe that an Israeli withdrawal from the canal would permit the Egyptians to scale down considerably the Soviet personnel manning SAM sites in the canal sector, something Sadat has said he is anxious to do. Qadhafi appreciates Egypt's long-term need for Soviet military aid, but he may hope that the breathing space provided by an interim agreement would at least enable the Egyptians gradually to displace the sizable contingent of Soviet military advisers.

Apart from this, Ambassador Bush's conversation with Numayri tells a good deal about current Sudanese thinking on the war. Numayri is clearly anxious for rapid progress toward a settlement. He claims that the closure of the Suez Canal has imposed an economic burden on Sudan in the range of \$65-75 million annually.

The Sudanese President's interest in achieving an interim agreement and in involving the US in that effort also reflects his own concern about the Soviet presence in Egypt. Since the pro-Communist coup attempt last July, Numayri has been extremely suspicious of Soviet motives and is attempting to replace Moscow's military aid and technical assistance programs by developing contacts with the West, China, Yugoslavia, and Romania. He is well aware that any reduction of the Soviet presence in the Middle East hinges on a political solution of the Middle East conflict. Egypt's successful pressure on Sudan in the past few weeks to accept a Soviet ambassador--the latest reminder of the weight that the Soviets carry in Cairo--is likely to make Numayri even more resentful.

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Neither Sadat nor Qadhafi has been heard from directly since their meetings before and after Sadat's trip to Moscow. Nevertheless,

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[redacted] if he could now count on Qadhafi and Numayri to protect his rear from radical Arab critics and Soviet disapproval, he might find it politically easier to take another step with the United States and Israel in search of an interim agreement.

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