

The President's Daily Brief

25 July 1972

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

25 July 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Soviets continue to withdraw from Egypt. President Sadat spoke for four hours yesterday, emphasizing his disappointment with Moscow's failures to meet its commitments to Cairo. (Page 1)

Egyptian air defense forces yesterday launched several missiles against Israeli fighters along the Suez Canal. (Page 3)

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Fighting in South Vietnam is heaviest in Quang Tri and Binh Dinh provinces. [redacted]

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[redacted] (Page 4)

The latest satellite photography shows that the Soviets are still building a very large ship with a flight deck of at least 400 feet. (Page 5)

Japan and China have begun official contacts with a view toward restoration of normal relations. (Page 6)

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EGYPT-USSR

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President Sadat spoke for four hours yesterday, without clarifying the causes of the Soviet withdrawal from Egypt. Sadat, frequently rambling and repeating himself, said, however, that the failure of the USSR to honor commitments to Egypt during 1971 had led to the present state of Soviet-Egyptian relations.

Without going into detail, Sadat reported that differences of view became apparent during his trip to Moscow in March 1971, but at the time he had been hopeful that the disagreements were between friends, and that the gaps could be bridged. A few months later, he said, when Soviet President Podgorny came to Cairo to sign a treaty of friendship, he was assured by the Soviets that the main differences between them would be resolved within four days of Podgorny's return home. In October, Sadat said, he was given yet another promise that a "definite agreement" would be implemented. The year 1971 passed, and with it Sadat's "year of decision," but the disagreement continued and ultimately led to the departure of the Soviets.

(continued)

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The Egyptian President never said explicitly that he had been looking for offensive weapons, and he never specified the nature of the differences nor of the Soviet commitment. To do so, he said, would play into the hands of Egypt's enemies. Instead, he made frequent references to the firm US military, political, and economic aid to Israel, and contrasted such aid with the limited Soviet response to Egypt's pleas for help.

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EGYPT-ISRAEL

Egyptian air defense forces yesterday launched several surface-to-air missiles at Israeli fighters along the Suez Canal.

President Sadat and a large political and military entourage visited frontline areas on Sunday. It has been implicit in Sadat's speeches and in Muhammad Haykal's political columns in al-Ahram that Egypt must recreate a credible threat of military action against Israel so as to induce some movement toward a settlement of the Middle East stalemate. Even an isolated aerial clash over the cease-fire lines would serve Sadat's purpose by raising international fears of new hostilities.

Israeli political leaders may be restrained from retaliating for fear of the effect such an action could have on the Soviet evacuation. In the past, however, Israeli doctrine has been to discourage Egyptian attacks by direct retaliation.

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VIETNAM

Fighting is heavy in Quang Tri City, where enemy troops entrenched inside the citadel area continue to hold off government assaults. South Vietnamese paratroops so far have been unable to enter the fortress through cuts in the wall made by allied air strikes. South Vietnamese Marine and Airborne units north, south, and east of the city continue to be harassed by enemy shelling and occasional ground attacks.

Route 1 between Quang Tri City and Hue is open, but a North Vietnamese regiment remains west of the highway and in position to close the road again. Government defenses west of Hue are still under enemy pressure; more than 2,000 shells were fired at Fire Support Base Bastogne and nearby troop concentrations on Sunday. Units from the South Vietnamese 1st Division have begun to move onto the high ground on both sides of Route 547 near Bastogne in an effort to force the Communists to move their artillery out of range of Hue.

In the government's counteroffensive in coastal Binh Dinh Province, Landing Zone English and the district capital of Tam Quan have been recaptured. Army units near the district capital of Hoai Nhon continue to consolidate their recent gains despite enemy shelling.

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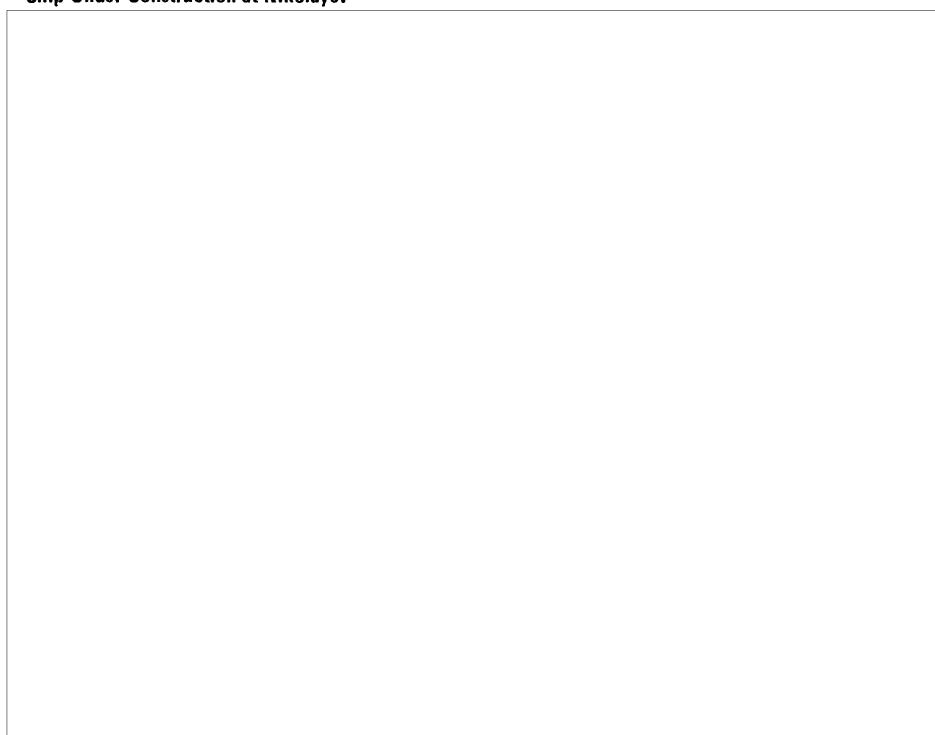
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Two additional Chinese freighters arrived late yesterday at the Hon Nieu anchorage serving Vinh, North Vietnam, joining the three other Chinese freighters already there. A sixth Chinese freighter remains at Hon La, 75 miles to the south.



Ship Under Construction at Nikolayev

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USSR

The latest satellite photography provides new information on the large ship under construction at Nikolayev on the Black Sea. When completed, it will be the largest ship in the Soviet Navy, some 800 feet long. Construction has not progressed far enough to allow us to discern a superstructure similar to the "island" on US aircraft carriers, but it is now apparent that the new ship will have a flight deck of at least 400 feet.

A flight deck of this length means that the ship will carry either helicopters with an antisubmarine mission, or high-performance short take-off and landing (V/STOL) interceptors and reconnaissance aircraft.

The new ship, begun in mid-1970, is being built at the same shipyard that produced the two Moskva-class helicopter carriers. It will not be operational for two or three years.

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

JAPAN-CHINA

Foreign Minister Ohira's meeting on 22 July with two Chinese officials is the most significant Sino-Japanese move to date toward regularized official contacts. Ohira later announced that Foreign Ministry representatives might have continuing direct contacts with the Chinese Trade Office in Tokyo.

Following Ohira's talks, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party formally inaugurated a council to foster a party consensus for normalization. Prime Minister Tanaka presented to the council a ten-point statement of principles for relations with Peking, emphasizing a "full understanding" of Peking's long-standing principles for normalization. Tanaka's attendance at the meeting indicates the importance he assigns to achieving party unity as well as Tokyo's desire to move ahead rapidly.

These developments are the latest in a series of increasingly friendly Sino-Japanese exchanges since Tanaka assumed office on 6 July. The new government has conveyed--both publicly and privately--its determination to improve relations, and Peking's response has been both prompt and positive. Premier Chou En-lai has welcomed formation of the Tanaka cabinet and, through a visiting Japanese Socialist, last week extended an informal invitation for Tanaka to visit Peking. No date has been set for such a trip, but Tanaka undoubtedly would like to go to the mainland before he calls general elections late this year or early next.

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

NOTE

France-China: The French Foreign Ministry is extremely pleased with Foreign Minister Schumann's recent visit to China. A Quai official characterized the visit as a reaffirmation of France's "special position" as the only government besides the US engaged in dialogue designed to "bring out" the Chinese. The only concrete result of the talks, however, seems to have been Foreign Minister Chi Peng-fei's acceptance of an open-dated invitation to visit France. Although agreement was reached on closer contacts in many areas, no regular consultations, such as France holds with the USSR, were planned.

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