

The President's Daily Brief

2 October 1972

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

2 October 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

In Vietnam, Communist forces in the Quang Tri area appear to be preparing for renewed activity against the provincial capital. We have details on a new directive issued by COSVN providing guidance to local cadre on Communist plans and intentions for the next month or so. (Page 1) 25X1

Laotian [redacted] 25X1
[redacted] (Page 3) 25X1

Diplomatic moves are under way in the Middle East with the apparent aim of effecting a reconciliation between Egypt and the USSR. (Page 4)

The Lebanese [redacted] 25X1
[redacted] (Page 5) 25X1

Border fighting has erupted between the two Yemens. (Page 6)

In the USSR, the party boss of Soviet Georgia has resigned amid signs of trouble in the republic's party organization. (Page 7)

Yesterday's attack on the Ubon air base in Thailand appears to have been the work of North Vietnamese sappers. (Page 8)

The Guatemalan Communist party is still trying to determine what the government has done with its leaders. (Page 8)

Pro - European Communities forces in Denmark are given the edge in today's referendum on market membership. (Page 8)

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VIETNAM

North Vietnamese forces in the Quang Tri area appear to be preparing for renewed activity against the provincial capital. According to an intercepted message, an antiaircraft regiment stated that "the policy is to move all of our forces to a point outside the Quang Tri citadel." Earlier messages called for more effort to support vehicle convoys moving supplies for the "major campaign." Another indication of impending action is a recent surge of logistical activity, including the transshipment of substantial quantities of fuel and ammunition.

* * *

[redacted] the Central Office for South Vietnam issued a new directive in mid-September providing additional guidance to local cadre on Communist plans and intentions for the next month or so. The directive amplifies instructions issued earlier by COSVN to its subordinates.

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The directive emphasizes that the mission of the local cadre remains the same. Communist forces are "to attack pacification, seize the bulk of the countryside, and expand the liberated areas, particularly those in the Mekong Delta." The enemy is to attack strongly in the northern half of the country, where its main forces are close to supply lines in the hope that such attacks will draw some of the government troops away from the provinces around Saigon and the delta, so that the Communists can attack successfully in these areas. The directive acknowledges that the Communists "cannot afford to use siege tactics in every province" and cites the battles of An Loc and Quang Tri where "we seized...rubber trees and bricks," but not the population.

The directive also indicates that the military highpoint scheduled for October may not be fully coordinated between main and local forces. While the main forces will try to launch increased attacks in many places, local forces have been told that they must attack on their own and not wait for the start of the highpoint. The directive emphasizes that "there can be no further delay. From now until the US presidential election we are determined to hit hard to force the enemies to accept a political settlement to end the war."

(continued)

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The COSVN directive informs lower echelons that the Communists intend to realize an on-the-spot cease-fire, and they envision negotiating with the Saigon government to determine the makeup of the third element in a new tripartite coalition government. In the expectation of a cease-fire and a political settlement, the Communists at the local level are directed to strengthen their forces so that each district would have at least one battalion.

[Redacted]

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The directive appears to draw a sharp distinction between local forces and main forces, ordering that "northerners" be kept in remote areas while the local armed forces wage political struggles with the enemy.

President Thieu evidently is also taking steps in anticipation of a cease-fire.

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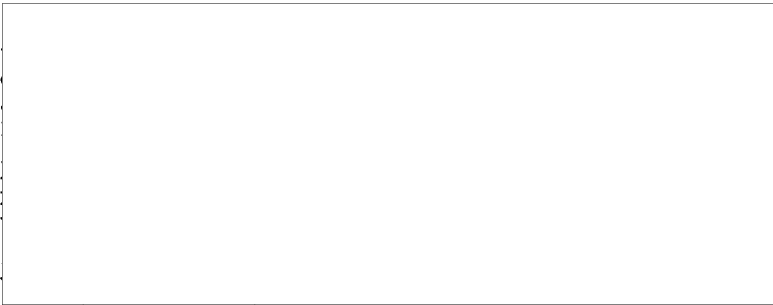
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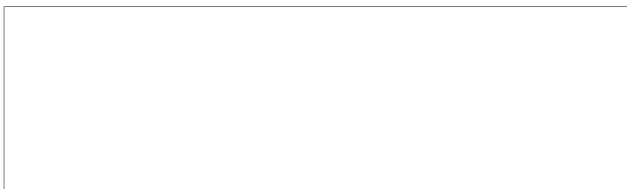
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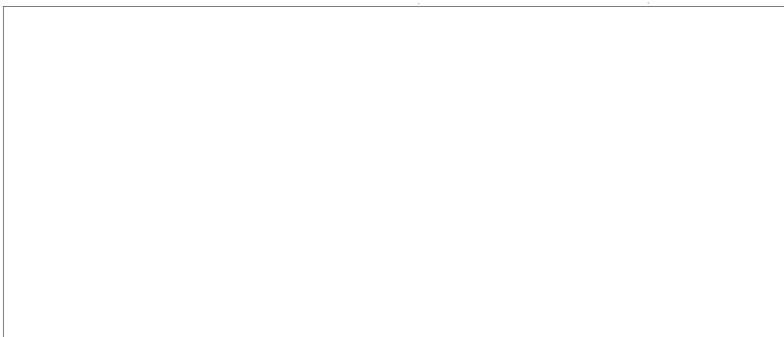
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USSR - MIDDLE EAST

The public disclosure that Syrian President Asad has been mediating between the USSR and Egypt seems designed to prepare the Middle Eastern and particularly the Egyptian public for a reconciliation at the summit. [redacted] a Soviet Foreign Ministry official has said that one of the Soviet leaders will meet with Egyptian President Sadat in about two months, probably in Cairo, after appropriate preparations had been made at lower levels. According to the Soviet, the first of these working meetings is to take place this week when Egyptian Deputy Foreign Minister Hatim visits Moscow. A further step, Premier Sidqi's journey to the USSR on 16 October, was announced after Asad's stopover in Cairo.

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The Soviets, still smarting from their forced withdrawal from Egypt last July, have been working hard in recent weeks to recoup some of their lost prestige in the Middle East. Medical supplies were delivered with fanfare to fedayeen elements after the Israelis bombed guerrilla bases. Lebanon was offered a "defense package." Iraq has been offered observer status in CEMA and perhaps a market for its oil. Syria has been on the receiving end of a well-publicized military airlift, while at the same time highly visible units of the Soviet Mediterranean squadron have anchored in Syrian ports.

President Asad most likely saw his mediation effort as a small price to pay for the military and political support Syria is receiving from the USSR. His credibility in Egypt no doubt has been enhanced by his continued resistance to Soviet pressures for Syria's agreement to a friendship pact, similar to those signed by Egypt and Iraq before Sadat's expulsion of Soviet military advisers.

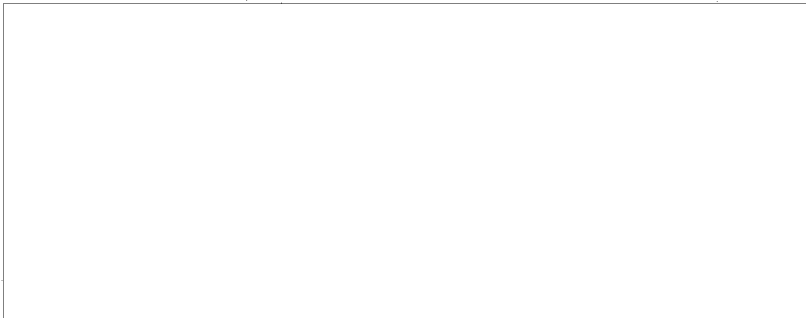
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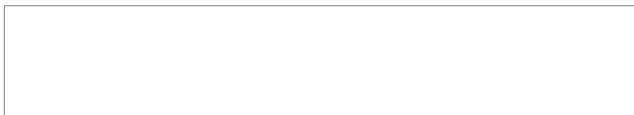
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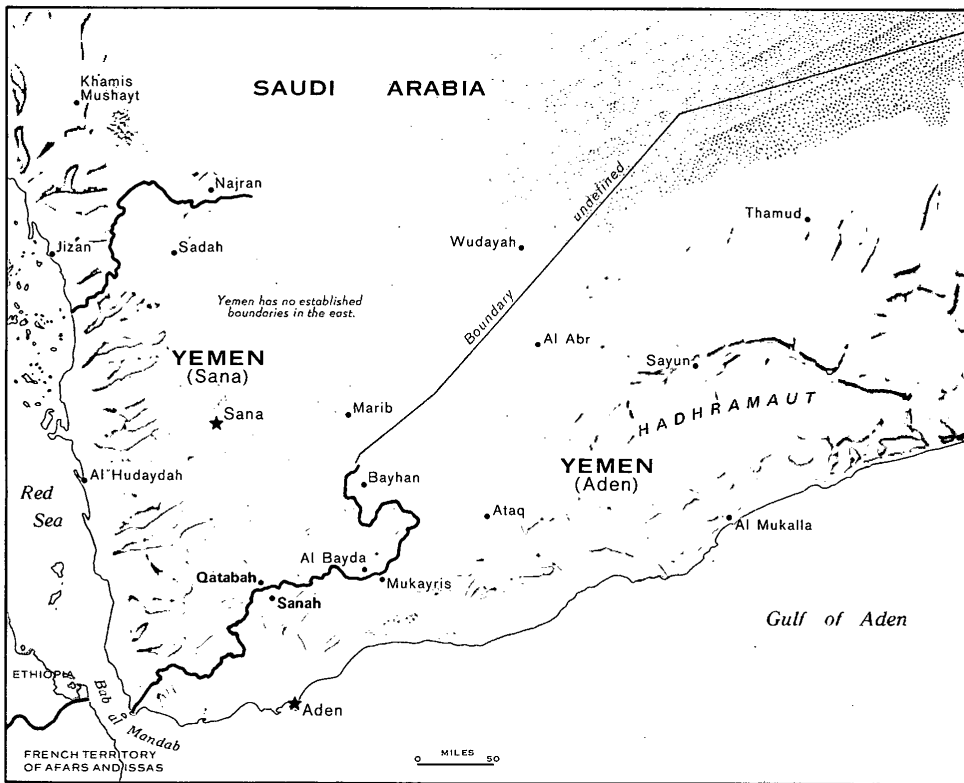
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YEMEN (SANA) - YEMEN (ADEN)

Border fighting between the two countries has intensified. Following forays in mid-September into Yemen (Aden) by exiles operating from sanctuaries in Yemen (Sana), Aden's regular forces began counter-attacking early last week with ground troops, air strikes, and shelling attacks. The key Sana border town of Qatabah fell to the Adeni forces yesterday. The Sana government has ordered its army to repel the invading Aden force.

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The Saudis have long been attempting to build an effective anti-Adeni force among the fractious dissidents.

[Redacted]

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Both Sana's and Aden's representatives to the Arab League have asked the League's conciliation committee to intervene. The committee, established in early September to mediate the long-standing dispute between the two Yemens, is scheduled to visit both countries this week.

Efforts at conciliation may have been complicated by a Soviet airlift to Aden. Six Soviet AN-12 transports and a VIP IL-18 aircraft have arrived in Aden from Moscow since 28 September. The timing of the airlift could aggravate Sana's relations with the Soviets, who are the principal source of military supplies for both Yemens. Sana has claimed to have shot down three Soviet-built MIGs since the border fighting erupted, and a government spokesman has asserted that some of the planes are being flown by "foreian pilots."

Sana has already asked Moscow to recall more than two thirds of the estimated 250 Soviet advisers in the country because of its displeasure with Soviet support for Aden.

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USSR

Seventy-year-old Vasily Mzhavanadze, a candidate member of the politburo, resigned as party boss of Soviet Georgia last Friday, ostensibly because of his age. Mzhavanadze had headed the Georgian party organization for almost 20 years.

The explanation given for Mzhavanadze's resignation is not convincing. There have been indications of trouble in Georgia since March. At that time the CPSU central committee formally criticized the party organization in Tbilisi, the republic's capital city, for corruption and nationalism. In July, the party chief of Tbilisi was removed and--curiously enough, given the corruption charges--the chief of the Georgian Interior Ministry, E. A. Shevardnadze, was given the job.

Today, the 44-year-old Shevardnadze is the new first secretary of the Georgian Republic. His fast rise to prominence suggests good connections in Moscow. The most likely avenue of Shevardnadze's connection is through Nikolay Shchelokov, the national minister of interior, and a close associate of party boss Brezhnev.

We expect that Mzhavanadze will lose his politburo post at the next meeting of the party central committee.

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NOTES

Thailand: A small-scale attack against Ubon air base yesterday involving about 35 mortar rounds, destroyed some communications equipment but apparently caused no other damage; there were no US casualties. Minor attacks on US bases in northeastern Thailand have occurred occasionally in the past, including two others on Ubon. They appear to be staged by North Vietnamese teams that are infiltrated especially for such missions and are then withdrawn.

Guatemala: The Communists are still trying to get proof of the whereabouts of their leaders. The Guatemalan press is full of rumors that the missing Communists have been killed by the government and official denials that the men had been arrested apparently have convinced no one. If the Communists are unable to prove the death of their missing leaders, they might be tempted to take hostages and offer the government an exchange in an attempt to smoke out the fate of their comrades. Should they become convinced that the men were executed, they might resort to violence without much further ado.



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Denmark - European Communities: Three separate polls give pro-EC forces a substantial margin in today's referendum on market membership. Two of the polls show approximately 55 percent favoring EC entry, 38 percent against and seven percent undecided. The third poll reflects an even greater margin in favor of membership--an indication that last week's "no" vote in Norway may have had a positive effect on Danish voters. A large majority in parliament favors membership and many Danes realize that rejection would have a strong negative effect on the economy. Furthermore, the rules governing the referendum tend to favor pro-EC elements. Pro-EC forces could suffer from a small turnout, however, and if less than 75 percent of the electorate ballots the result could be close.

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