

The President's Daily Brief

17 November 1973

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Egyptian-Israeli prisoner exchange continued yesterday without hitch, and Syria's president has indicated some flexibility on agreeing to an exchange. The battle fronts were the quietest yet. (Page 1)

The Greek Government's suppression of student demonstrations has probably set back its experiment in promoting greater democracy. (Page 2)

A somewhat unusual message suggests that North Vietnamese infiltration through southern Laos may increase markedly in the next six months. (Page 3)

South Vietnam

(Page 4)

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Notes on resumption of operations at the Syrian oil terminal at Baniyas, the continuing failure to form a government in Turkey, and international monetary developments appear on Page 6.

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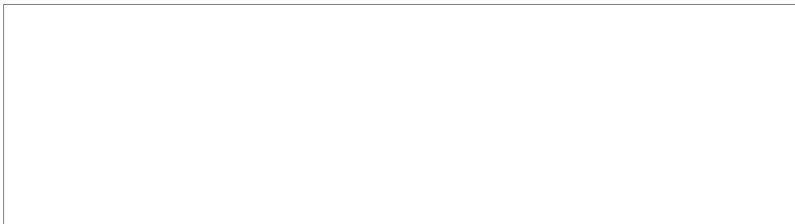
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ARAB STATES - ISRAEL

The Egyptian-Israeli prisoner exchange continued into its second day yesterday with no apparent hitch. More than 1,300 of the approximately 8,000 Egyptians have now been repatriated, and Cairo has returned 54 of the 247 Israeli prisoners. A convoy of UN-controlled vehicles brought the first wounded civilians out of Suez city yesterday, carrying about 300 of the town's estimated 1,200 wounded. As convoys of a non-military supplies to Suez city and the Egyptian Third Army continued, Tel Aviv reported that it turned back several Suez-bound trucks that were carrying fuel.

According to Secretary General Waldheim, Syria's President Asad has told a special UN envoy that Damascus would be ready to reach agreement on the exchange of prisoners of war if Israel were willing to accept the lines as they existed at the outbreak of hostilities on October 6. Asad said that an Israeli declaration of intent, rather than an actual return, would be sufficient and that negotiations could then proceed on "humanitarian aspects." Prime Minister Meir has at least initially rejected Asad's proposal, however, saying that the POW issue is a separate matter not linked to any other question.

Yesterday was the quietest day on the battle fronts since the war began, with only a single report of small arms fire on the Egyptian front marring the cease-fire.



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Since the cease-fire Beirut has shown interest in obtaining a UNEF presence along its border with Israel. No formal request has been made, however, and Lebanon has apparently decided to await developments in the peace negotiations before pursuing the matter. Security Council approval would be required to expand the UNEF patrol area.

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GREECE

The Papadopoulos-Markezinis experiment in promoting greater democracy probably received a severe setback last night as the government suppressed student demonstrations in Athens.

Martial law was imposed throughout the country this morning. Prime Minister Markezinis initially postponed a press conference at which he was to have announced further measures in the "politicalization" of the regime and in the scheduling of the promised "impeccable" elections, but now he is again scheduled to speak early today.

The police restored order in the capital last night after six hours of rioting and violent clashes; two deaths were reported. Early this morning army tanks and police moved into the Polytechnic school at Athens University, which students had occupied since Wednesday. A government communiqué this morning announced that "no one would be allowed to disturb further the lawful order and calm of the Greek people." Demonstrators returned to the streets today, however.

President Papadopoulos had initially ordered that no force be used, in the hope that the students would eventually withdraw if left alone. As the demonstrations grew, however, he evidently felt obliged to follow the advice of his military police chief that they be halted, by force if necessary.

The students have been demanding greater academic freedom and immediate restoration of a democracy. They had staged sporadic protests since a clash with police on November 4 following a memorial service on the fifth anniversary of the death of former prime minister George Papandreou. Prominent former political leaders exploited the trial of arrested demonstrators by directly attacking the government. The light sentences accorded those convicted reflected the conciliatory approach the government took until last night.

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VIETNAM

The number of North Vietnamese groups infiltrating through southern Laos may increase markedly during the next six months. According to a message intercepted on November 11, groups of some 600 men each will pass through the system on 19 days of every month beginning in December. The message indicates that these groups are earmarked for the central highlands and the southern half of South Vietnam. The total is comparable to the 68,000 that Hanoi sent to these areas in the 1971-72 dry season.

Several aspects of the message are unusual and suggest that it may not be an entirely accurate forecast. The number of infiltrators for these two regions is much larger than predicted by an earlier message, which indicated that only 13,000 men would pass through the system from November to March. So far, no troops have been detected. Dispatch of infiltration groups on only 19 days of each month is also highly unusual. Hanoi normally sends one or two groups every day while a movement is taking place. Moreover, the infiltration network has been improved in the past year and is probably capable of efficiently handling an even heavier flow than before.

The latest forecast makes no mention of troop infiltration to the northern and coastal areas of South Vietnam. If Hanoi intends to engage in heavy and sustained fighting there, additional troops would have to be sent south to replace anticipated losses.

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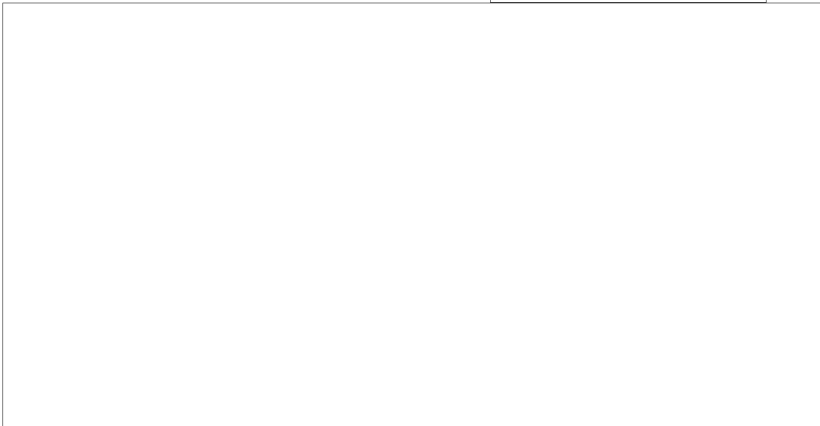
SOUTH VIETNAM

A top-level power struggle may cause President Thieu to dismiss one or both of his two most important aides.

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Presidential Assistant Nguyen Van Ngan and Information Commissioner Hoang Duc Nha have been vying for influence for some months.

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Thieu depends heavily on the backing of the military establishment, and if it comes to a showdown between civilian advisers and his senior commanders, he is likely to back the military.

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FRANCE

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NOTES

Syria-Iraq: The Syrian oil terminal at Baniyas, a major outlet for Iraq's oil exports, apparently has resumed operations, although somewhat below capacity. The Israelis destroyed about 60 percent of the terminal's oil storage facilities, and the port itself had been out of operation since October 7. About 8 percent of Western Europe's oil came from Iraq, principally through the Baniyas facility.

Turkey: Suleiman Demirel, the leader of the second largest party in parliament, has concluded that he is unable to form a coalition government. Bulent Ecevit, who heads the largest parliamentary group, failed in a similar attempt just last week. Former President Sunay reportedly has proposed that he be allowed to head a "grand coalition" of the two major parties, but this suggestion may not get much support either. Turkish politicians are rapidly running out of options, and new elections may be necessary.

International Monetary Developments: Growing pessimism over West Germany's economic prospects in view of the impending oil shortage is causing strong internal pressure on the European joint float. This pressure resulted in revaluation of the Norwegian crown on Thursday, and both the Swedish and Danish crowns closed at their upper limits against the mark yesterday. Although the Scandinavian countries rely heavily on Arab oil, Arab restrictions will hurt them less than more highly industrialized West Germany, and pressure for revaluations of the other Scandinavian currencies probably will continue.

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