



The President's Daily Brief

26 November 1973



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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

26 November 1973

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Egypt called off yesterday's scheduled meeting with Israeli representatives on the question of disengagement of forces, but another meeting is set for today. Tensions remain high on both military fronts, and the Israelis reported a brief exchange of artillery fire on the Egyptian front yesterday. (Page 1)

Elements of the Greek Army ousted President Papadopoulos in a bloodless coup early yesterday morning. Both Ioannidis--the Chief of Military Police who reportedly engineered the coup--and new President Gisiakis are reported to be pro-American and pro-NATO. (Page 3)

The leaders of 15 Arab states meet today to forge a common policy for dealing with Israel and the US, but dissatisfaction with the conference is apparent even before it begins. (Page 4)

Moscow is maintaining a cautious attitude toward the fedayeen until Palestinian issues are resolved within the Arab camp. (Page 5)

Secretary General Luns is urging that the NATO declaration of Atlantic principles be completed in time for the semi-annual NATO ministerial meeting on December 10 and 11. (Page 6)

The Yugoslav Government, after refusing to receive Romania's Foreign Minister early this month, has announced that he will visit Belgrade today and tomorrow. (Page 7)

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ARAB STATES - ISRAEL

Egypt called off yesterday's scheduled meeting with Israeli representatives on the question of the disengagement of forces, apparently in protest against what the Egyptians view as Israeli stalling. Another meeting is set, however, for today.

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Although General Gamasy, Egypt's chief negotiator, has indicated that he personally will not participate in further talks, there has been no indication that the Egyptians intend to terminate the meetings completely. UN sources have indicated that Egyptian-Israeli exchanges, despite disagreement, have been conducted in a constructive and friendly atmosphere.

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The prisoner-of-war issue may again emerge as a serious issue between Egypt and Israel. Israeli Defense Minister Dayan has publicly accused Egypt of murdering some prisoners, and the US Interests Section in Cairo has unconfirmed information that the Egyptians are still holding 101 Israeli prisoners whose names have not been given to the Red Cross. The prisoners are said to be persons who are either not Israeli citizens or who hold dual citizenship. The group reportedly includes some Americans.

The Israeli cabinet announced its decision yesterday to accept "in principle" the convening of a peace conference at Geneva to be attended by Israel, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, the US, the USSR, and the UN Secretary General. Israel is withholding official acceptance, however, until it receives a formal invitation to the conference. The Israeli press has indicated that the opening will be only pro forma as far as Tel Aviv is concerned and that substantive negotiations must await the conclusion of Knesset elections on December 31. The Israeli list of conference participants omits mention of the Palestinians or any other UN Security Council members that the Arabs may insist on including.

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[Redacted] US sources have been unable to confirm any of this Egyptian or Syrian activity. Egyptian air activity, in fact, has been normal or below normal.

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The Arabs [Redacted] appear concerned that the Israelis may intend some action. [Redacted]

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Actual military incidents yesterday were limited to a 30-minute artillery exchange on the northwestern edge of the Israeli salient on the west bank. The Israelis announced the activity and stated that it was initiated by the Egyptians.

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GREECE

Elements of the Greek Army ousted President Papadopoulos in a bloodless coup early yesterday morning. The takeover, reportedly engineered by Chief of Military Police Dimitrios Ioannidis, installed First Army Commander Phaidon Gisikis as President and Adamantios Androutsopoulos--a former minister of finance and of interior under Papadopoulos--as prime minister. The country is calm. Papadopoulos is variously reported as either under house arrest at his seaside villa 25 miles south of Athens or as having left Athens yesterday on a special aircraft.

Ioannidis had long been dissatisfied with Papadopoulos' handling of the government and had been reported to have been only awaiting the opportunity to act. The three military services reportedly supported the coup. An unsigned proclamation, issued yesterday "in the name of the armed forces," charged that the Papadopoulos government, instead of creating suitable conditions for the nation's return to a healthy parliamentary life, was leading the country "toward the same situation against which the armed forces rose in 1967."

The 17-man cabinet includes only civilians. All are relatively obscure, and little is known about their political orientation. Both Ioannidis and Gisikis are reported to be pro-American and pro-NATO.

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ARAB SUMMIT

The leaders of 15 Arab states meet today to try to forge a common policy for dealing with Israel and the US. Dissatisfaction with the conference is apparent, however, even before it begins. Iraq and Libya are boycotting the gathering, largely because Egyptian President Sadat has worked to assure the conclave's acceptance of his decision to negotiate with Israel. King Husayn has decided not to attend primarily over the Jordan-fedayeen issue. Aside from the divisive issues which have kept these three away, their very absence deprives Sadat of the show of solidarity for which he had hoped.

The conferees probably will agree on extending the oil embargo to South Africa, Rhodesia, and Portugal and to endorse Arab participation in the forthcoming peace conference. The heads of state are unlikely, however, to reach a decision on use of Arab monetary resources as a political weapon.

Egypt apparently wants to keep discussion of the Palestine issue as cursory as possible. The summit may name Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization to participate in peace negotiations, but the fedayeen's own inability to agree on territorial demands and on the desirability of establishing a government-in-exile probably preclude any further decision by the heads of state. They are likely to let the fedayeen work out among themselves how to establish an independent Palestinian entity.

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USSR-FEDAYEEN

Moscow is maintaining a cautious attitude toward the fedayeen until Palestinian issues are resolved within the Arab camp. Soviet media have ignored the six-day visit of Yasir Arafat's delegation, and a Middle East specialist in the European Ministry denied to a US Embassy officer on November 23 that Arafat was in Moscow.

[redacted] Arafat sought:

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--a Soviet statement of full support for Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization as the sole legal representative of Palestinians;

--agreement to the opening of a PLO office in Moscow; and

--a Soviet commitment to seek international recognition of a Palestinian provisional government should the fedayeen agree on one.

The Soviets probably used Arafat's visit to take soundings on these issues and on the question of Palestinian participation in a Middle East conference. In talks with the US, the Soviets have stressed the complexity of the Palestinian problem and have said the USSR would not be in a position to support or propose solutions until after the Arab summit in Algiers.

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NATO-US

Secretary General Luns is urging that the NATO declaration of Atlantic principles be completed in time for the semi-annual NATO ministerial meeting on December 10 and 11. The allies last week accepted the revised French text of the declaration as the basic draft. Most, however, clearly want some changes in it.

There is a general consensus that comments or revisions from all members should be presented by November 28. Belgium's representative has forcefully stated that a US contribution is important now if there is to be a collective dialogue of the Fifteen rather than one between the US and the Fourteen.

The Canadians have "serious problems" with the French draft. They oppose the French concept of European defense, which holds that the US and Europe face different threats and implies a basic weakening over the long term of the US-European defense relationship. Moreover, the French draft casts doubt on the need for the continuing presence of Canadian forces in Germany.

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NOTE

Romania-Yugoslavia: The Yugoslav Government, after refusing to receive Romania's Foreign Minister Macovescu early this month, has announced that Macovescu will visit Belgrade today and tomorrow. Macovescu's visit comes at a troubled juncture in relations, as the Yugoslavs appear to be turning from close ties with Romania to a new rapprochement with the USSR. The next meeting in a long series between Presidents Tito and Ceausescu is scheduled for the end of the year. Before it can take place, Macovescu must assess the meaning for Romania of Tito's new relationship with Brezhnev. He must also find out why the Yugoslavs have pressured the Romanians to give up their independent Middle East policy, and why Belgrade's Communist Party is moving toward neutrality in the Sino-Soviet quarrel, rather than backing Romania's position that China has a right to be different.

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