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The President's Daily Brief

January 3, 1975

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MIDDLE EAST - USSR

Some observers in the Middle East are expressing skepticism over reports that General Secretary Brezhnev postponed his trip to Egypt, Syria, and Iraq for health reasons, according to the US embassy in Beirut. The observers are attributing the postponement to Soviet displeasure with Egypt and Syria, primarily Egypt.

The embassy reports that Soviet officials in Beirut have been telling selected newsmen of Soviet dissatisfaction with President Sadat. They say that Sadat refused to meet Moscow's demands that Egypt take "concrete steps" in return for an improvement in Egyptian-Soviet relations.

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[redacted] Moscow is "furious" over the fact that Brezhnev's visit to Damascus was originally scheduled to coincide with a visit by Saudi King Faysal. President Asad reportedly angered the Kremlin when he informed the Soviet ambassador that he could not reschedule Faysal's visit and that Moscow should understand that Syrian-Saudi relations are of the highest importance to Damascus.

Soviet and Egyptian media are still running commentaries in high praise of Soviet-Egyptian relations, but Moscow will probably not be pleased with a speech by President Sadat last night reiterating his confidence in US-sponsored peace negotiations and explicitly advocating a delay in reconvening the Geneva conference. Sadat said that he fears that, if "we do not reach agreement with the superpowers" before going to Geneva, the situation will return to "a state of polarization--with the Soviet Union supporting the Arabs and the Americans supporting Israel."

Sadat spoke warmly of the Soviets, asserting that he fully accepts Brezhnev's reason for postponing the trip and expects to begin a "new page" in Egyptian-Soviet relations when the trip is rescheduled. On the state of relations now, Sadat said only that "signs of a new phase began to emerge" during Foreign Minister Fahmi's visit to Moscow.

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USSR

Two officials of the USA Institute in Moscow told US embassy officers late last week that Soviet objections to the "Schlesinger Doctrine" on target selection are unaffected by the Vladivostok accord.

M. A. Milshtein, chief of the strategic studies department at the institute, and L. S. Semeyko, his deputy, asserted that the doctrine is unacceptable because it gives a national leader a choice of various modes of nuclear attack and thus makes nuclear war an option. They said the stress in the doctrine on the importance of missile accuracy implies an attempt to acquire a first-strike capability. Both men argued that the "race for accuracy" should be controlled, and Semeyko suggested the possibility of limiting the number of tests of new systems "perhaps to 10 or 15."

Both also mentioned, as they had in a recent article, that once the nuclear threshold is crossed, it would be impossible for the side under attack to determine within the time at its disposal whether the attack is limited or full-scale. Milshtein said that he could be comfortable with the doctrine only if both sides agreed to "rules of the game" which, he implied, would govern the steps in escalation to full war. He quickly added, however, that the Soviet Union would be unlikely to agree to such "rules."

Milshtein said that the Soviets would never make a nuclear first strike and that as a matter of policy, all Soviet missiles are aimed at military targets. Semeyko seconded this, but added that the term "military targets" is not defined in a narrow sense.

Another USA Institute official, foreign policy department chief G. A. Trofimenko, had expressed a somewhat different attitude toward the "Schlesinger Doctrine" in early December, also during a conversation with US embassy officers. Trofimenko had said that provision for such a large number of warheads in the Vladivostok agreement had reduced the importance of the main Soviet argument against the "Schlesinger Doctrine," the danger that in establishing the need for more targets, it would also

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create a need for more warheads. The Soviet attitude toward the doctrine "would still be negative," he had contended, but the terms of the Vladivostok agreement meant that the Soviet side could move to a similar strategy.

Milshtein and Semeyko revealed considerable interest in, and expertise on, Chinese strategic affairs. Semeyko repeatedly noted that the Chinese threat must be taken into account in any Soviet discussion of arms reduction. Milshtein alluded to the dilemma faced by the USSR in seeking to maintain an "assured destruction" capability against China. He said McNamara's "assured destruction" doctrine was effective when at least 25 percent of a nation's population and 50 percent of its industrial complex could be destroyed, but he noted, semi-seriously, that for China a 25-percent population loss might be viewed as an incentive, not a deterrent, to attack.

Milshtein, a retired lieutenant general and former dean of faculty at the General Staff Academy who apparently still moves in high military circles, also said that the harder line on the troubles in Western society taken recently by Soviet military publications was to be expected. One could not preach uninterrupted peace and harmony, he said, and expect military vigilance and combat readiness to remain at acceptable levels. He added, however, that the Soviet military has never spoken out against any agreement reached by the government and has kept its personnel aware of the process of detente.

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USSR

Press coverage of the US has become more critical and strident, probably as a direct result of the generally adverse Soviet reaction to the restrictive clauses affecting the USSR in the recently passed foreign trade legislation.

Moscow media have published a lengthy catalogue of US economic and social ills and are scoring the US in unusually explicit terms for alleged interference in the Middle East, Vietnam, and elsewhere.

The campaign appears to be primarily a reaction to restrictions on the amount of credits available to the USSR and the well-publicized efforts of some in the US to link the legislation to Soviet concessions on emigration policy. Moscow may also have decided that by playing up problems in the US and the West in general, it would be easier to maintain discipline at home and convince Soviet allies of the need to stand firm on ideological issues.

Despite the increased criticism, there has been no public questioning of the importance of continued detente. Izvestia on December 29 observed that "reliable peace is unthinkable without a fundamental normalization of US-Soviet relations," and the New Year's message to the Soviet people gave full praise to improved relations with the West.

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LATIN AMERICA

With the next meeting of the hemisphere's foreign ministers just over two months away, Latin Americans are growing less and less receptive to an inter-American dialogue with the US.

One of the carrots that sustained Latin American faith in the eventual productiveness of the hemispheric talks, the US Trade Reform Act, now looks like a stick to Latin American eyes. Many governments have denounced the inclusion of restrictions aimed against members of OPEC and other cartels, and the reaction has begun to go beyond rhetoric.

Ecuador has announced that it would not attend the Buenos Aires meeting in March if the legislation becomes effective. President Rodriguez probably will lobby for a boycott, especially on the part of fellow OPEC members. Venezuela's President Perez has complained about developed nations calling for dialogue while "threatening" less fortunate countries. Government-influenced media in Panama and Peru have also protested the trade bill as a violation of US commitments to Latin America.

Trade is but one source of growing frictions. The US is being criticized over numerous other economic issues and over political issues such as the sanctions against Cuba and CIA's clandestine activities. Restrictions on US firms abroad exporting to Cuba can have seriously adverse effects on relations with particular governments. Mexico, for example, has been pressing US companies to participate in Mexican-sponsored trade missions to Cuba. In Argentina, a congressman is calling for an investigation of CIA activities and for the expulsion of all CIA personnel. This kind of problem may spread after the publication of a Spanish version of a book by former CIA employee Agee.

Editorials from usually friendly Uruguay have been critical, claiming that the "famous new dialogue has been shown to be totally nonproductive." Talk in Montevideo and other capitals has begun to suggest the wastefulness of a foreign ministers'

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meeting in March and an OAS general assembly the following month. Various governments have emphasized the "noninstitutional" aspects of the foreign ministers' sessions and suggested that the OAS should be beefed up as a more enduring vehicle for inter-American cooperation.

The overall feeling among Latin Americans of increasing distance from the US probably will make alternative cooperative efforts more attractive. Venezuela and Mexico, for example, have begun to make some inroads on the skepticism that first met their call for a Latin American economic system that would exclude the US. Various Latin American summits have taken place recently and more are scheduled for 1975, all aimed at unifying Latin America and increasing Latin pressure on the US.

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LEBANON-SYRIA

Lebanese President Franjiyah yesterday held a hastily scheduled private meeting with Syrian Foreign Minister Khaddam near the border, according to unconfirmed reports in the Arab press. The two supposedly discussed military cooperation to defend southern Lebanon against increasingly serious Israeli attacks.

In addition, Beirut radio announced yesterday that Syria's President Asad will visit Lebanon next Tuesday. This activity is unusual, as the Lebanese are perennially suspicious of Syrian motives and offers of assistance. Syrian aid activity in Lebanon is usually limited to Palestinian fedayeen groups in the southern part of the country, who themselves pose a significant threat to the Lebanese army.

Syria last month promised Lebanon "full support"--presumably meaning military assistance--in its difficulties with the Israelis.

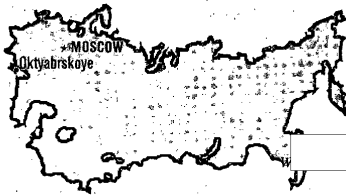
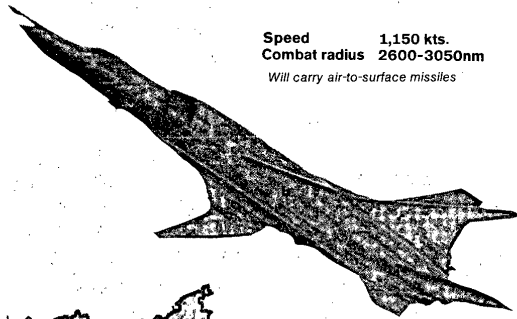
[redacted] his return from a one-day visit to Damascus. This offer was made in response to Beirut's call for Arab aid to help prevent Israeli incursions into Lebanese territory.

Lebanon has appealed for outside assistance before--usually to assuage the government's leftist and Muslim critics--but has always backed away from accepting subsequent offers of sophisticated arms or foreign troops. President Franjiyah's personal involvement this time suggests that Beirut may go further and accept limited help from the Syrians, probably in the form of anti-aircraft weapons.

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Backfire at Soviet Naval Aviation Training Base

Speed 1,150 kts.
Combat radius 2600-3050nm
Will carry air-to-surface missiles



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NOTES

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The Soviets probably plan to allocate 100 to 150 of the aircraft to naval aviation. Most of these planes will probably be assigned an anti-ship strike role in areas peripheral to the USSR; a few will probably be used for maritime reconnaissance.

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China appoints more civilians to top provincial party posts once held by military officers.

New appointments in Fukien and Kiangsi are the fourth and fifth provincial vacancies filled in the past year, leaving only three provinces without publicly identified party leaders. The appointments seem to be part of a package worked out in Peking in preparation for the long-awaited 4th National People's Congress. Kiangsi and Fukien are badly factionalized provinces where armed clashes occurred between rival power groups during the anti-Confucius campaign. The new appointees, who are veteran civilian officials purged during the Cultural Revolution, face tough assignments in establishing their authority and reducing tension in these provinces.

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