



# The President's Daily Brief

*February 10, 1975*

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*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

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ISRAEL

*The conviction is growing among Israelis that they need be in no hurry to reach an agreement with Egypt and that Tel Aviv is in a position to strike a hard bargain. According to the US embassy, the Israelis apparently assume that war will not break out in the near future even if Secretary Kissinger's mediation effort should fail, but that if war should come, Israeli military forces are prepared.*

Although Prime Minister Rabin has publicly re-endorsed the US approach to a settlement in stages, many Israeli parliamentarians appear to have reached the conclusion that the utility of the staged approach is about over. They are deeply skeptical about prospects for a second-stage agreement with Egypt, believing that President Sadat will not concede to Israeli demands for a state of nonbelligerency and for a long-term accord.

Both moderates and hardliners are looking at the alternative of a reconvened Geneva conference. Advocates of a Geneva conference say that Israeli attendance would:

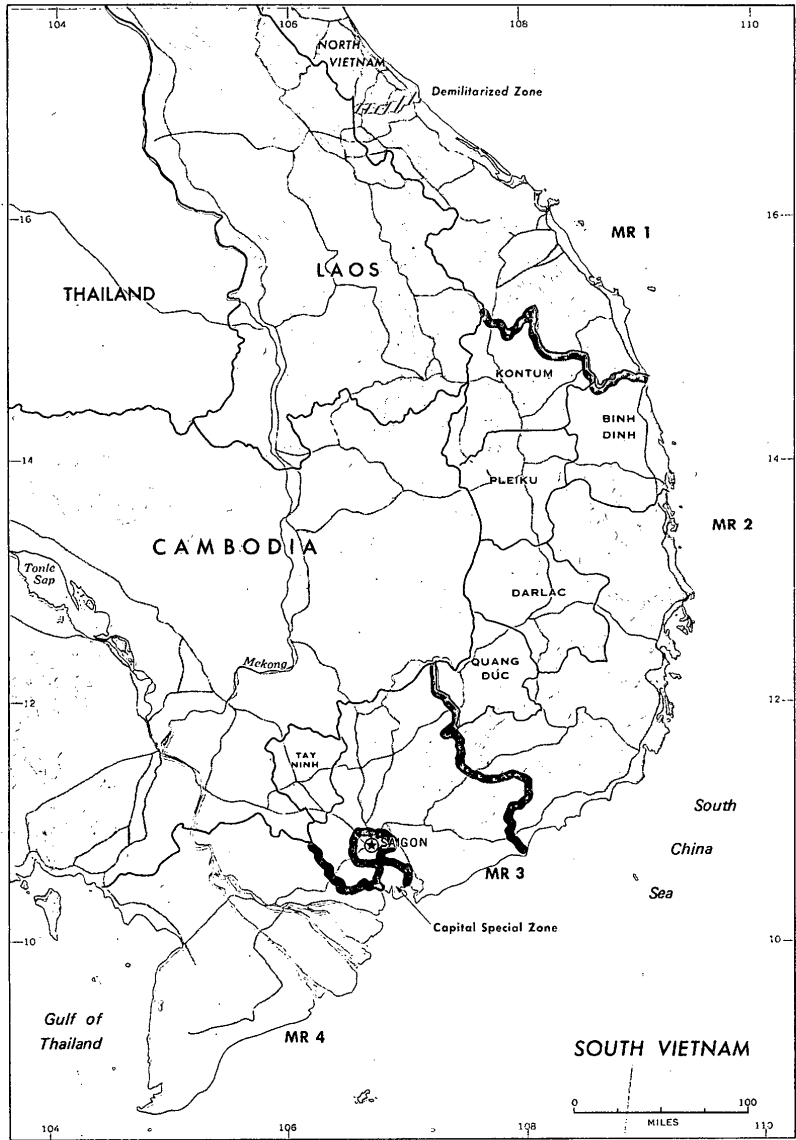
--Convince Western opinion that Israel is not creating an obstacle to negotiated settlement.

--Forestall an Egyptian effort to link a Syrian agreement to an interim agreement with Egypt.

--Force the Arabs to recognize that they must make far-reaching substantive political concessions in order to obtain Israeli withdrawals.

--Enable Israel to retain its bargaining position until Arab intentions are clarified.

In general, the more intransigent Israelis see the convening of a Geneva conference primarily as a tactical move by which Israel can stall for time and demonstrate to the world that the Arabs are not interested in peace. The moderates view a Geneva conference as an opportunity to explore the possibility of a definitive settlement.



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SOUTH VIETNAM

*With Tet beginning tomorrow, all indications point to an increase in communist shellings and terrorist attacks. There are no reliable signs, however, of movement by communist main forces.*

Saigon's military forces throughout the country are on full alert, and government holiday celebrations will be limited to one day instead of the usual three.

Countrywide, the following military activity appears likely:

--In Military Region 1, local skirmishing is expected to continue in varying degrees of intensity. Some government commanders see the current action as the prelude to a full-fledged main-force offensive sometime this spring.

--In Military Region 2, reports from the principal trouble spots--Binh Dinh Province on the coast and the central highland provinces of Kontum and Pleiku--indicate little activity. The government remains concerned, however, that heavy communist assaults against provincial capitals in the central highlands may occur soon.

--In Military Region 3, stepped-up action is expected in the provinces around Saigon, especially Tay Ninh. Intercepts indicate that the Viet Cong will make a major effort to conduct terrorist attacks in Saigon. Some of the fighting may result from government operations scheduled to begin yesterday by the region's new commander, General Toan. Toan reportedly ordered elements of all three government divisions to go on the attack and "carry the war to the communists." There is some concern among his senior staff officers that these plans are overly ambitious and may involve unnecessary risks.

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--In Military Region 4, communist forces reportedly have celebrated the holiday early and will conduct shellings and terrorist attacks against government outposts, some district and provincial towns, highways, and canals. Most government commanders feel, however, that recent heavy casualties and low morale among Viet Cong forces in the delta will limit both the intensity and the effectiveness of their Tet actions.

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NOTES

*The two Soviet cosmonauts in the Soyuz 17 space ferry returned to earth safely yesterday after completing 30 days in space.*

The cosmonauts spent 28 days in an orbiting space station. Their mission marked the third successful docking of a Soyuz spacecraft and a Salyut space station.

\* \* \*

*Ethiopian government forces in Eritrea face serious supply shortages because of their inability to break through the rebel encirclement of Asmara.*

At the same time, the rebels' ability to sustain the level of fighting is questionable. The insurgents are believed to be drawing chiefly on stockpiles built up during the past year when the fighting was light. Their resupply through South Yemen or from Sudan is difficult and time consuming. The US consul in Asmara reports that the ruling military council is trying to get a committee of Eritrean notables to resume an intermediary role between the council and the rebels. The council, however, has reiterated its stand against independence for Eritrea.

\* \* \*

*Cyprus remained quiet over the weekend, despite several indications on Friday that a Turkish military operation might be imminent.*

[redacted] that the chances of an early Turkish military initiative have dimmed.

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[redacted] troop movements on Friday were preparatory to a military exercise scheduled to begin on Wednesday.

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[redacted] Turkish General Staff has no immediate plans to capture additional territory.

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