

Noted by DCI
5/28/74

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The President's Daily Brief

May 27, 1974

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exemption category 5B(1),(2),(3)
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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

May 27, 1974

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Fighting increased Sunday as the Israelis and Syrians exchanged artillery fire along the Golan front. Syrian planes reportedly struck Israeli ground targets on the northern edge of the Israeli salient. The Soviets announced this morning that Foreign Minister Gromyko will arrive in Damascus today. (Page 1)

President Thieu reportedly has approved plans for a South Vietnamese initiative to resume discussions with the Viet Cong [redacted] (Page 2)

The US consulate in the Azores reports the emergence of a political group that will agitate for self-determination. The group is small and poorly organized but it may be able to rally wide support in the islands. (Page 3)

The Egyptian press yesterday published the text of a long letter from President Sadat to Libyan President Qadhafi. The letter criticized Qadhafi's handling of the abortive merger of the two countries last year. (Page 4)

The East Germans, presumably with Soviet prompting, are trying to repair relations with Bonn in the aftermath of the Guillaume affair. (Page 5)

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MIDDLE EAST

Fighting increased Sunday as the Israelis and Syrians exchanged artillery fire along the Golan front. In addition, Israeli planes carried out defensive patrols and reconnaissance missions over northern Israel and southern Lebanon. Syrian aircraft flew defensive patrols, probably in reaction to Israeli activity over the Golan Heights. No air-to-air combat was noted.

Syrian planes reportedly also struck Israeli ground targets on the northern edge of the Israeli salient. These were the first such strikes on Israeli-held territory since May 10.

According to the Lebanese Defense Ministry, Israeli and Lebanese troops exchanged artillery fire yesterday as Israeli patrols attempted to take up positions on the western side of Mt. Hermon. An Israeli official acknowledged the shelling; he claimed that Israeli fire was directed against guerrilla bases in Lebanon.

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On the political front, the Soviets announced early this morning that Foreign Minister Gromyko will arrive in Damascus today "at the invitation of the Syrian leadership." [redacted]

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SOUTH VIETNAM

President Thieu has approved in principle plans for a South Vietnamese initiative to resume discussions with the Viet Cong

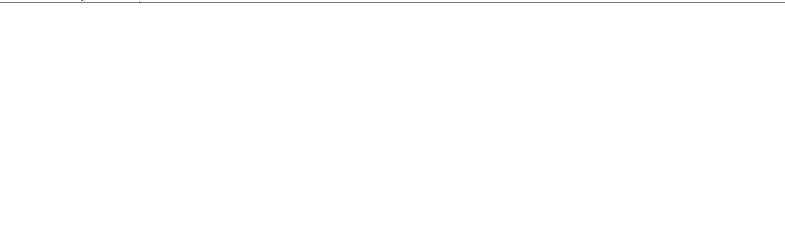
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The Paris political talks were suspended on April 16 when the South Vietnamese walked out in protest over Communist seizure of the Tonle Cham ranger base northwest of Saigon. The Viet Cong pulled out of the two-party military discussions in Saigon on May 10, in response both to South Vietnam's boycott in Paris and to suspension of diplomatic privileges for their military delegation in Saigon.

The plans currently being considered by Thieu call first for a resumption of the Saigon talks by restoring Viet Cong privileges and immunities. If this initiative proves successful, efforts will be made to renew contacts at the Paris level.

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AZORES

The US consulate in the Azores has reported the emergence of a political group that intends to agitate for self-determination. One of the local leaders has already requested US support for independence for the islands. He stressed Lisbon's long-standing neglect of the Azores and expressed serious doubt that the new Portuguese government would be any more attentive to the islands' problems.

The consulate comments that, although the group pushing for independence is small and poorly organized, it will probably be able eventually to rally wide support. This would create a new problem for the Spinoza government, and could also introduce complications into US-Portuguese negotiations for renewal of the Azores base agreement, which expires later this year.

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*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY***EGYPT-LIBYA**

Egyptian radiobroadcasts and newspapers yesterday carried the full text of a long letter sent by President Sadat to Libya's President Qadhafi early this month. The bulk of the letter is a criticism of Qadhafi's handling of the abortive merger of the two states last year. Parts of the document that were released late last week dealt with Libya's criticism of Egypt's conduct of the October war and Qadhafi's subsequent decision to cut off Libyan aid to Egypt.

Sadat apparently has released the complete text of his letter to inform all Arabs, and Egyptians in particular, of the substance of his contacts with Qadhafi. He hopes to convince the Arabs that the severe strains in Egyptian-Libyan relations are the direct result of Qadhafi's wrongs and not of Egypt's policies. Sadat may also be attempting to ensure that all members of the Libyan Government do, in fact, have an accurate account of his message to Qadhafi.

The Egyptians have let the letter speak for itself. Editorial comment by Cairo newspapers, which printed the text under banner headlines, has been relatively restrained. The authoritative Al-Ahram commented that Sadat's message points out positive aspects of the Libyan "revolution" and opens the way to "rectification" of past mistakes.

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NOTE

East Germany - West Germany: The East Germans, presumably with Soviet prompting, are trying to repair relations with Bonn in the aftermath of the Guillaume affair. Party chief Honecker has publicly stressed East Germany's continued commitment to detente, and has sought to project a conciliatory stance on a number of minor issues. Pankow reacted quickly to West German Chancellor Schmidt's statement to the Bundestag that, despite strains in relations, the treaty structure between East and West Germany should be further developed. The East German news agency voiced agreement with Schmidt, and added that Pankow is ready to consider broadening economic ties, modifying requirements for visitors to East Germany, and cooperating on an energy system to include West Berlin.

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