



# The President's Daily Brief

*February 28, 1975*

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*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

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Table of Contents

USSR-Middle East: Moscow has probably concluded that it cannot block Egyptian-Israeli disengagement negotiations. (Page 1)

OPEC: OPEC is faced with potentially divisive problems, but all can be resolved without severely testing the cartel's cohesiveness. (Page 2)

Cambodia: Prince Sihanouk claims that North Vietnam has stepped up arms deliveries to Cambodia in response to the US airlift. (Page 3)

Syria-Israel:

[Redacted]

(Page 5)

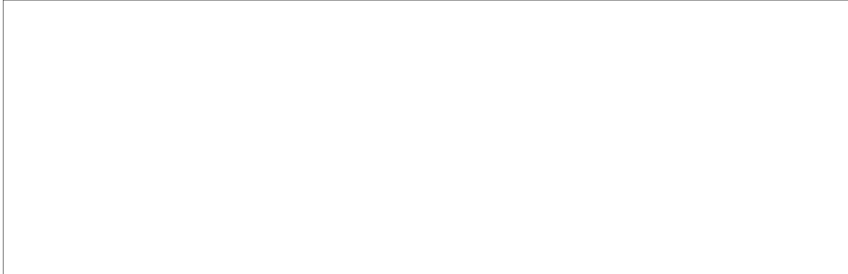
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Note: Syria (Page 6)

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USSR - MIDDLE EAST

*Moscow has probably concluded that it cannot block Egyptian-Israeli disengagement negotiations and is now trying to convey the impression that it is working to facilitate an agreement.*



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shortly after Foreign Minister Gromyko's meeting with Secretary Kissinger, the Soviets weighed in with Egypt and Syria, expressing general backing for the current disengagement talks. The Soviets reportedly said that although they still want the Geneva conference to resume and prefer simultaneous movement on the Egyptian, Syrian, and Palestinian fronts, they will not stand in the way of Secretary Kissinger's efforts.

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Even allowing for some self-serving exaggeration on the part of the Soviets, their statements suggest they have become somewhat more reconciled to a new Egyptian-Israeli disengagement agreement since Secretary Kissinger's meeting with Gromyko in Geneva. Soviet broadcasts have criticized negative Western accounts of the Geneva meeting and particularly stressed the significance of the discussions on the Middle East. They have given special prominence to Secretary Kissinger's comment that final settlement in the Middle East will require Soviet participation and cooperation.

This stance also indicates that, despite Soviet resentment of the US-sponsored talks on Egyptian-Israeli disengagement, there is little Moscow can do at this stage to impede an accord. In addition, the Soviets presumably think completion of the bilateral negotiations is necessary before talks can resume in Geneva, where they expect to play a more prominent role.

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OPEC

*While OPEC is currently faced with some real and potentially divisive problems, all probably can be resolved without severely testing the cartel's cohesiveness.*

Yesterday in Vienna the OPEC oil ministers concluded their meeting laying the groundwork for an OPEC Summit Conference that opens in Algiers on Tuesday. The oil ministers agreed to postpone until April 1 consideration of ways to offset the decline in the value of the US dollar.

In their final communiqué, the ministers also reaffirmed their decision to freeze oil prices through September. They decided to take no action to coordinate oil production levels of member states at this time and agreed to permit the United Arab Emirates to lower its price differential.

The potentially most divisive issue OPEC faces is that of production prorating. So far, the international oil companies have done remarkably well in spreading the cuts among the producing states in a manner acceptable to them. We believe that OPEC will be extremely reluctant to undertake a serious prorating effort because it raises a whole host of equity issues for the membership. In the past, the organization has chosen to avoid the issue and to leave the apportioning to the companies, and they are likely to continue to do so.

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## CAMBODIA

*Prince Sihanouk claims that North Vietnamese leaders have agreed to step up deliveries of Chinese arms to the insurgents in response to the US airlift to Phnom Penh. In the course of a press interview in Peking yesterday, Sihanouk said he had worked out the agreement during his visit to Hanoi during the Tet holidays. Meanwhile, a gathering of Khmer communist officials in Cambodia issued a broad policy statement yesterday which suggests that the communists are readying the party apparatus for a national take-over.*

Intercepts--which disclosed a significant flow of supplies into northeastern Cambodia early this year--have not reflected any arms deliveries in over a month. There could be a lag of several weeks, however, between the time a decision is made in Hanoi to increase arms deliveries and their arrival in northeastern Cambodia.

Sihanouk also said in the interview that total US withdrawal from Cambodia is the only way to reach a peaceful resolution of the conflict. The Prince maintained that he would not stay on as head of state after a Khmer communist victory, but would be willing to accept a role as roving emissary.

A Khmer communist "national congress"--an assembly that rubber stamps policy formulated by the Khmer communist party central committee--issued a communiqué yesterday that amounted to a broad policy statement looking toward the end of the war. The communiqué included:

--Notice that "ringleaders" such as Lon Nol, Long Boret, Sosthene Fernandez, and Sirik Matak, "must be killed for their treason."

--Assurances that other "top- and middle-level" civilian and military officials would be well treated if they stop cooperating with the "traitors."

(continued)

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--A call for all foreign embassies in Phnom Penh to evacuate and a communist refusal to bear responsibility for any "accidents."

--Promises of an "independent and nonaligned" foreign policy allowing no "foreign" military bases and accepting all unconditional aid.

The communiqué made no mention of negotiations and did not include even the standard rejection.

The congress--the second such gathering since the Cambodian conflict began--was chaired by "deputy prime minister and defense minister" Khieu Samphan. The communiqué maintained that the congress was held under "extremely favorable circumstances" with the Lon Nol government "on the verge of collapse militarily, economically, and politically."

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SYRIA- ISRAEL



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NOTE

*A Syrian foreign ministry official yesterday confirmed to Ambassador Murphy that the official statement issued Wednesday claiming that President Asad had been misquoted in the current issue of Newsweek had been intended chiefly for domestic consumption.*

The official characterized the retraction as a "tactical" move necessary to protect Asad's supporters in the leadership of the Syrian Baath Party; a series of party elections begins next week. The official assured the ambassador that, as Asad had indicated, Syria would be willing to sign a peace treaty with Israel if the terms were right. He said Asad would make this clear "at the proper stage in negotiations."

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