

TOP SECRET



The President's Daily Brief

October 28, 1975

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

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LEBANON

The fighting entered a new stage over the weekend, as Christian and Muslim extremists for the first time battled for control of neutral areas in central Beirut.

Until the weekend, the two sides had been staying generally within their respective enclaves, shelling nearby areas controlled by their opponents but venturing out only for hit-and-run bombing attacks in the commercial areas of the city. The expansion of the area of hostilities has reduced further the limited area over which the Lebanese government has effective control. The cease-fire announced by Prime Minister Karami after an emergency cabinet meeting Sunday afternoon was immediately and widely disregarded.

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[redacted] So far, the army has been used only to secure the road from the city center to the international airport, to control selected government buildings and installations in Beirut, and in a very limited way to replace internal security service units on the periphery of the city.

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The spread of fighting apparently represents only the continuing deterioration of the general security situation rather than the introduction of any additional groups into the hostilities. The major fedayeen groups, including Fatah and Saiqa,

[redacted]

[redacted] have not yet become directly involved in the fighting. Fatah headquarters in Beirut continues to admonish all Fatah units to respect the cease-fire.

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It is possible, if the security situation continues to deteriorate, that Christian army officers will be moved by a sense of their own frustration or President Franjyah's ineptness to seize control of the government, with or without Franjyah's

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acquiescence. In the past, such thoughts would have been discarded by awareness among high-ranking officers that any such move would lead to civil war and to widespread divisions within the army. Given the current trend, however, these officers could soon conclude that Lebanon is already in civil war, and that there is more to lose by waiting than by acting.

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SPAIN

Most Spanish officials, convinced that General Franco will not recover, are focusing on the post-Franco period. The first clues as to the intentions of Prince Juan Carlos in pressing for reform should appear in the speech he is expected to make after the transfer-of-power ceremonies.

Juan Carlos has a good chance of winning commanding support if he develops a policy that clearly departs from the tenets of Franco's rule without appearing to be an abrupt rupture with that era. He will have to suggest gradual progress toward establishing a freer political system but indicate clearly that this evolution will be tightly controlled.

There will be some trouble, regardless of how skillfully Juan Carlos manages the transition period. The far-left Antifascist and Patriotic Revolutionary Front may intensify its terrorist campaign when Juan Carlos assumes power. Fifteen alleged members of this group were arrested over the weekend.

Violence from the extreme right may also increase. On Sunday, a right-wing group publicly ordered 17 prominent Catalans associated with leftist political organizations to leave the country within 24 hours after Franco's death or face death themselves.

The military and, to a greater extent, the police are maintaining a low-level alert.

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SPANISH SAHARA

Both Spain and Morocco are expressing optimism that their countries can reach agreement on the Spanish Sahara following the visit of Moroccan Foreign Minister Laraki to Madrid late last week.

A high-ranking Spanish official claims that the dispute within the Spanish government between Prime Minister Arias, who favored ceding the Sahara to Morocco in return for guarantees regarding Spanish interests in the territory, and Foreign Minister Cortina, who wanted to grant self-determination to the area, has been settled in favor of Arias. The Spaniards are being very tight-lipped, however, about their terms for settlement.

The Spanish information minister has announced that a bill has been submitted to the Cortes that would empower the government to take any action deemed necessary to decolonize the Sahara. The minister also stated that Spain stands by its policy, communicated to the UN Secretary General last May, to decolonize under UN auspices while continuing discussions with interested parties. Should the UN be unwilling to give its blessing to Spain's action, Madrid reserves the right to take unilateral steps.

Morocco seems pleased with the latest round of talks with Spain. In a statement on October 25, Foreign Minister Laraki said the two governments discussed ways of settling the dispute peacefully, in accordance with the UN Security Council resolution of October 22, and that Spain and Morocco were "on the road to agreement."

Laraki made a quick trip to Mauritania on Sunday, and his Mauritanian counterpart reportedly arrived in Morocco yesterday for talks with King Hassan. Both countries claim the Spanish Sahara and apparently have an agreement to partition the territory.

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UN Secretary General Waldheim, who was authorized by the Security Council to undertake immediate consultations with the parties involved, spoke with King Hassan on Sunday and went on to Mauritania the same day. He was in Algiers yesterday and arrived in Madrid last night.

Algeria, for its part, questions how bilateral negotiations between Rabat and Madrid can be reconciled with last week's Security Council resolution calling for discussions among all interested parties-- a formulation that would allow Algeria to participate in any talks. Algeria is increasing its press attacks against Morocco and is giving heavy play to adverse world press reaction to Morocco's planned march. The press has emphasized that Morocco's claim to Spanish Sahara was questioned in the recent advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

Algiers is probably giving arms to the Polisario Front, a pro-independence Saharan party that Algeria has been supporting for some time. The government may also soon allow Moroccan dissidents living in Algeria to resume activities. At the UN, Algerian Foreign Minister Bouteflika can be expected to argue that the opinion of the International Court of Justice clearly supports self-determination for the Spanish Sahara. He is also likely to call for consultation with the people of Spanish Sahara, as recommended in a recent UN fact-finding report.

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NOTES

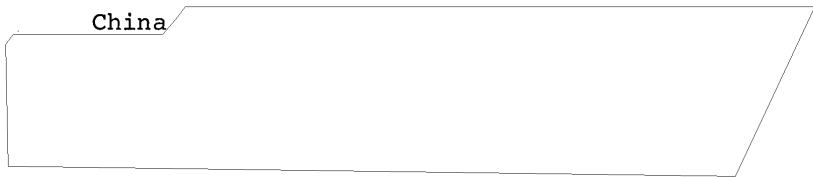
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