



The President's Daily Brief

November 4, 1975

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Exempt from general
declassification schedule of E.O. 11652
exemption category 5B(1),(2),(3)
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LEBANON

The latest cease-fire is threatened today by sniper fire, just as attention had begun to shift to the feuding between Prime Minister Karami and Interior Minister Shamun.

The uneasy relationship between the two leaders has sharply deteriorated as a result of Karami's recent accusations that Shamun's National Liberal Party was partially responsible for the most recent round of fighting. Karami has also taken over security responsibilities previously handled by Shamun, including the negotiation and implementation of the latest cease-fire. The Prime Minister will hold a cabinet meeting today to gain majority approval of the new truce, apparently to head off anticipated criticism from Shamun.

Past quarrels between Karami and Shamun have been successfully mediated and, in the latest, President Franjiah and others apparently are trying to work out a reconciliation. There is now talk, however, that Shamun will resign from the cabinet. US officials in Beirut believe that the withdrawal of the only effective spokesman for Christian interests would further erode the authority of the government and probably would trigger another round of serious fighting.

The security situation in Beirut has improved since the weekend. [redacted]

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[redacted] security forces have been able to strengthen their positions in the luxury hotel district where fighting had been especially fierce. Although sporadic clashes and sniper fire continue in some areas of the city, violations of the truce seem to be declining gradually. [redacted]

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there is guarded optimism about this cease-fire because it was negotiated by those actually engaged in the fighting, rather than by politicians and other intermediaries of the warring factions.

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BANGLADESH

Brigadier Musharraf appears to have gained control of the Bangladesh government with little or no bloodshed. President Mushtaque offered to resign, but Musharraf [redacted] plans to retain the President for the time being in a figurehead role. Both the President and Musharraf probably wanted to avoid serious fighting.

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In exchange for the President's capitulation, Musharraf has apparently agreed to permit the Chief of Staff, General Ziaur Rahman, and the young majors who led the coup last August to leave the country.

Musharraf and Ziaur have been rivals within the military. Musharraf had a supportive role in the coup last August but subsequently lost ground in the hierarchy when he quarreled with some of the coup leaders.

New Delhi may have been caught off guard by the coup. [redacted] India did not expect any moves by the Bangladesh military against the government [redacted]

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Musharraf's power grab increases chances of further anti-government moves, especially by supporters of Ziaur and the majors. Ziaur is extremely popular in the army as a result of his leadership during the independence struggle and the war with Pakistan. The majors probably have a following among troops who were dissatisfied with the regime of former president Mujib.

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SYRIA

The following is the precis of a special national intelligence estimate, "Syria - The Next Step?" approved yesterday by the US Intelligence Board.

Despite Syria's increasingly intransigent public position on future peace negotiations, we believe President Asad is still interested in talks concerning a second-stage Israeli withdrawal on the Golan Heights.

The Syrians, however, are likely to continue to insist as a precondition that the Palestine Liberation Organization be recognized in some way as a party to the negotiations before they will engage in such talks.

Meanwhile, Damascus will exert maximum pressure on the US and Israel, hoping thereby to underscore an urgent need for diplomatic movement and to force concessions to Syria's negotiating demands.

Between now and November 30, Asad's strategy will be to increase military tension in order to create concern about Syria's military intentions and whether it will agree to the renewal of the UN disengagement observation force.

If necessary, however, Asad will go beyond mere posturing, and this will lend further credibility to his "war of nerves."

The Syrians have few, if any, good diplomatic moves to play. They do, however, have a range of military options that include:

--Additional troop movements, exercises, alerts, overflights, reserve call up.

--Military "incidents," including firing across the UN buffer zone at Israeli patrols, short incursions into the Israeli disengagement area, and the facilitation of fedayeen terrorist and sabotage operations on the Golan Heights.

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--Some form of a "war of attrition" involving artillery barrages.

--Major military operations with the aim of seizing and holding specific objectives.

--Resumption of major hostilities.

We do not believe Asad will deliberately resort to full-scale war. He may, however, take military actions short of war if his current pressure campaign fails to produce acceptable diplomatic results. Under these circumstances, we believe that:

--Syria will continue to step up its pressure campaign as November 30 draws nearer. Some serious "incidents" will probably occur during this period.

--If this "war of nerves" does not produce diplomatic results, there is a good chance that Asad will increase the pressure even further by letting the UN mandate run out, perhaps while continuing to abide by the military limitations of the Syrian-Israeli disengagement agreement. This would create a crisis atmosphere without provoking an Israeli attack.

--At this point, however, limited military operations by Syria cannot be ruled out and these would run a high risk of Israeli retaliation and a general escalation of the fighting.

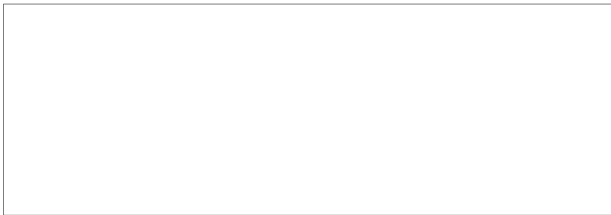
--The situation in Lebanon could deteriorate in a way that drew in Syrian and Israeli forces. Fighting between them in Lebanon could rapidly spread to the Golan Heights as well.

The Israelis, for their part, are reluctant to take any new diplomatic initiatives concerning the Golan Heights both because of the area's military importance and the very difficult domestic political problems that could be raised. They will be even less interested in doing so in a situation of increased tension induced by Syria.

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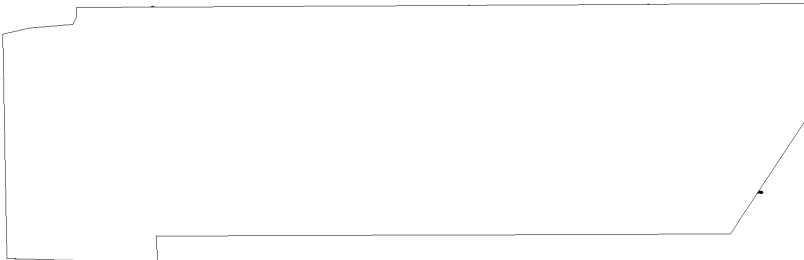
EGYPT-USSR



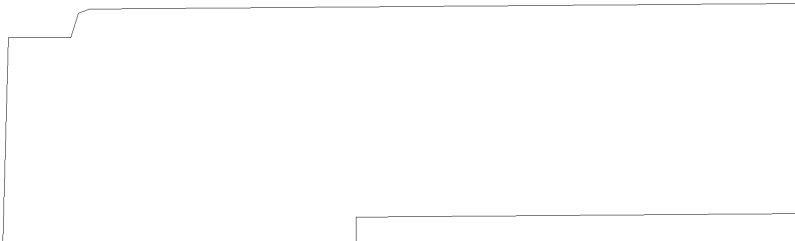
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Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister Ieng Sary and his Thai hosts in Bangkok have apparently established a favorable atmosphere for future contacts between the two countries.

The agreement to establish diplomatic relations was probably particularly gratifying to the Thai, who have thus far made little progress in resolving their differences with the Vietnamese or the Lao. Nevertheless, the joint communiqué's vague formulation on the timing of ambassadorial exchanges--at a convenient date "depending on prevailing conditions"--confirms that the Cambodians are not yet ready to permit noncommunist diplomats in Phnom Penh.

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After meeting with his French counterpart last week, West German Defense Minister Leber told Ambassador Hillenbrand that he believes France is prepared to cooperate more closely with both the West Germans and NATO.

Leber said that meaningful progress had been achieved in the areas of military planning and arms standardization. He also claimed that French Defense Minister Bourges agreed to have French military officials participate in planning with the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe on hypothetical military contingencies.

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