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The President's Daily Brief

November 19, 1975

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November 19, 1975

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

LEBANON

Snipers killed passersby indiscriminately in several suburbs of Beirut yesterday. The attacks almost certainly were carried out by extremists hoping to upset the two-week-old cease-fire and halt the little progress that has been made in political negotiations.

Despite the killings, central Beirut remained relatively calm, and the large private militias did not allow themselves to be drawn into sustained clashes. The deputy commander of the national gendarmerie, Fuad Kiwan, announced that he had been named to head the new 300-man security force, and that the unit would be in the streets in force today.

Splinter groups on the Lebanese far left probably were responsible for yesterday's attacks. At least ten such organizations have been involved in the recent fighting. They are feeling especially belligerent now as a result of Prime Minister Karami's offer last weekend to reach a political compromise with the country's Christian leaders.

Representatives of most Palestinian and Lebanese leftist groups met last night to "review their support" for Karami, according to press reports from Beirut. Kamal Jumblatt, head of the Progressive Socialist Party and spokesman for the leftist coalition, demanded earlier in the day that Karami spell out the details of the reforms he is proposing.

In a speech to parliament, Karami avoided a direct response to Jumblatt. The Prime Minister has limited himself for the past week to lengthy but obscure statements designed to convince Muslims that reforms are coming but to assure Christians at the same time that these reforms will involve "reinterpretations rather than amendments" of Lebanon's constitution.

PORTUGAL

Continuing tension between the government and the Communist Party has provoked renewed Communist warnings of a rightist coup, further discussion of a plan to move the government to the north, and demonstrations in the Azores protesting "anarchy" on the mainland.

The Communists apparently fabricated the coup rumors to serve their own purposes. Two Communist-dominated Lisbon dailies alleged yesterday that a coup would be launched today by prominent anti-Communist officers led by Northern Military Region Commander Pires Veloso. The Armed Forces General Staff has denied the story.



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The popularly elected constituent assembly continues to discuss a plan to move the government to Porto. Broached last week when Prime Minister Azevedo was prevented from leaving his residence for two days by pro-Communist demonstrators, the proposal reportedly is favored by the center-left Popular Democrats and Socialists. The Prime Minister and others see it, however, as premature, and at least one government official has described the plan as unlikely to become a reality.

Demonstrations in the Azores on Monday are a clear signal to Lisbon that there is widespread concern in the conservative islands over recent events on the mainland. If the turmoil in Portugal remains unchecked, the move for independence advanced by the Azorean Liberation Front could make substantial progress.

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

SOUTH AFRICA - ANGOLA

South African support of the National Front for the Liberation of Angola and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola has expanded considerably in the past few weeks, though we do not know how many South Africans are involved in the fighting.

Pretoria reassessed its relatively detached position toward Angola last summer as the country slipped toward civil war, and Soviet assistance to the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola increased and became more open. At that time, the Popular Movement ousted its Angolan rivals from Luanda and began to gain a military advantage farther south.

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South African assistance has been essential to the recent successes of the National Front and National Union in recapturing several seaports and pushing the Popular Movement back toward Luanda. The South Africans are skeptical that the Front's stalled campaign north of Luanda will be as effective.

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Pretoria's commitment is not open-ended. Prime Minister Vorster has carefully reviewed each step of the growing involvement before giving his approval and at one point seriously considered withdrawing before Angola became independent on November 11. The South Africans finally decided to stay for the near future, apparently because of the success of the National Front - National Union push into central Angola.

Vorster may also have been encouraged by the general absence of criticism of South African involvement by either black Africa or the international community. His efforts at detente with black Africa do not appear to have suffered.

Nevertheless, Vorster also realizes that a withdrawal now would seriously weaken the National Front - National Union campaign.

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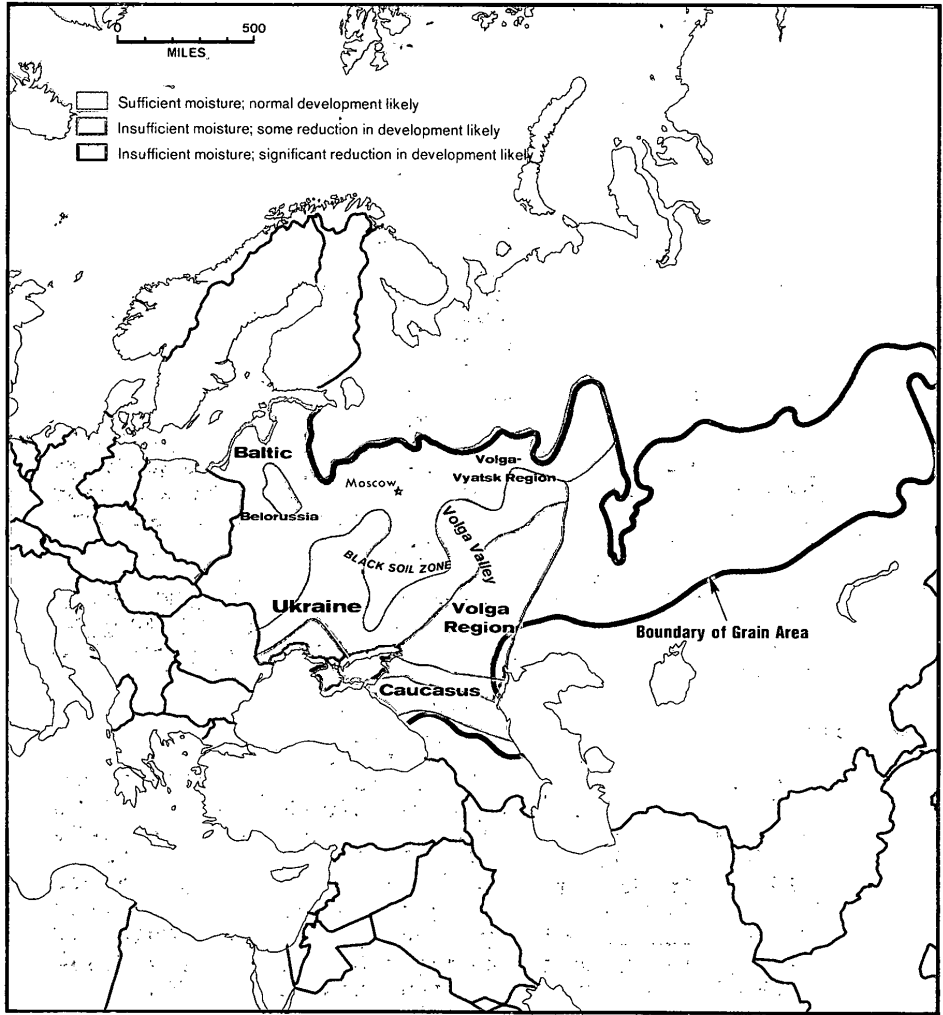
Vorster is concerned over the growing Soviet and Cuban support of the Popular Movement, particularly the appearance of nearly 3,000 Cubans in Angola and Cabinda. In a recent talk with US officials in Pretoria, he was clearly worried that the increased Soviet and Cuban aid may tip the balance again in favor of the Popular Movement. If this happens, he will pull out South African personnel on short notice

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USSR: Probable Effects of Soil Moisture on Winter Grains



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NOTES

This year's severe drought has left important Soviet winter grain areas short of the soil moisture required for a good crop next summer.

Persistent drought conditions have limited germination; the seedlings that have come up are not sturdy and hence are more vulnerable to winter-kill. The winter crop, which usually accounts for one third of total grain production, is critical because grain stocks are extremely low. In an effort to recover from the 1975 harvest failure, the Soviets have planted the largest area in winter grain since 1970.

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Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister Ieng Sary and Thai Foreign Minister Chatchai apparently agreed on November 17 on the modalities for liaison offices and for government-to-government trade.

Ieng Sary announced that joint liaison committees will be located in a Thai and a Cambodian border town to maintain communications and to deal with any problems between the two countries.

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