



The President's Daily Brief

December 16, 1975



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LEBANON

Security forces in Beirut have begun carrying out their assignments under the latest cease-fire arrangement.

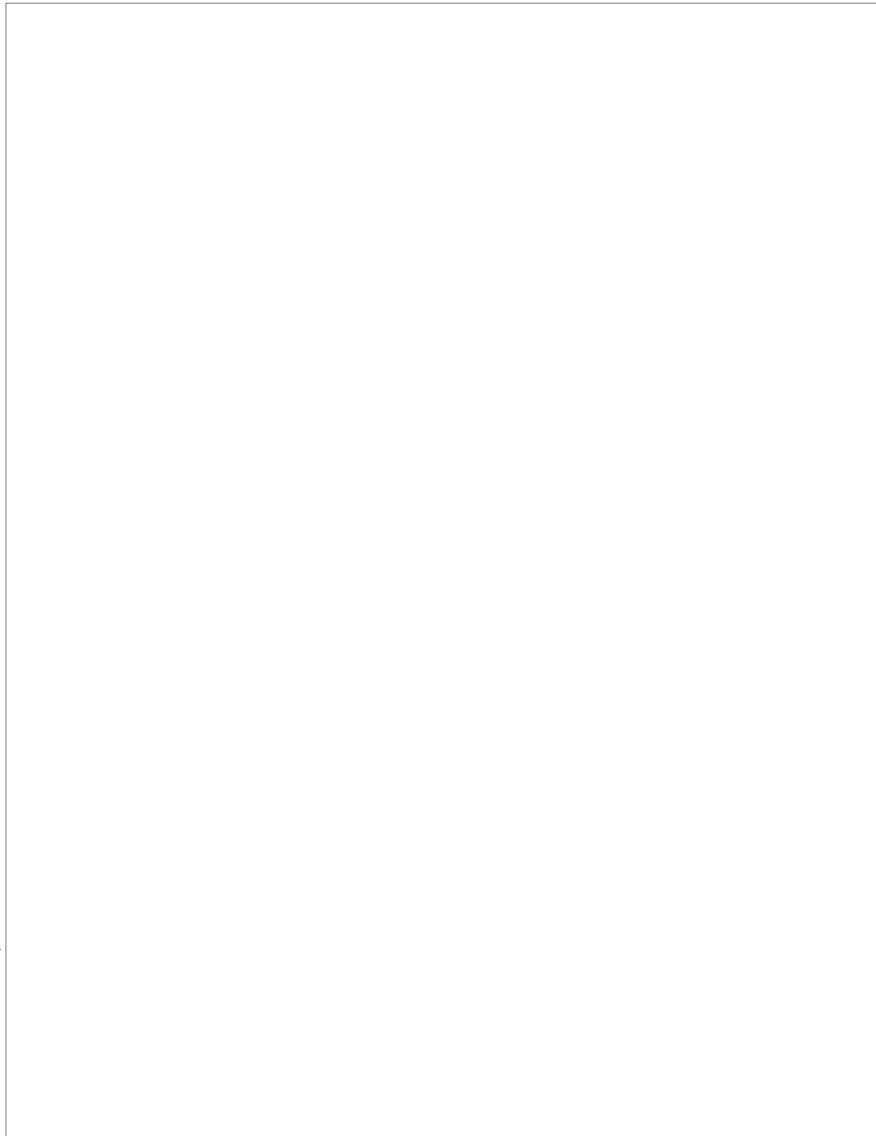
They have taken over some vantage points in the international hotel district from leftist Muslim forces that had won control of much of the area. The new cease-fire effort, worked out late Sunday night by Prime Minister Karami and Palestinian leader Arafat, differs from its predecessor only in that it calls for the security forces rather than the army to take up positions in the hotel district. This was a concession to the leftists, who had refused to relinquish their vantage points to the army.

The Syrians have summoned a number of Lebanese leaders to Damascus over the past ten days in an effort to lay the groundwork for a deal to end the fighting. Leftist leader Kamal Jumblatt, whose allies have played a major role in the most recent fighting, met with President Asad yesterday. Syrian Foreign Minister Khaddam may soon go to Beirut for broader mediation efforts.

Vital services in Beirut are beginning to break down as a result of the months of fighting. Telephone and telex links with Europe have been broken, air services have been cut back, and shortages of food and other necessities are beginning to be felt.

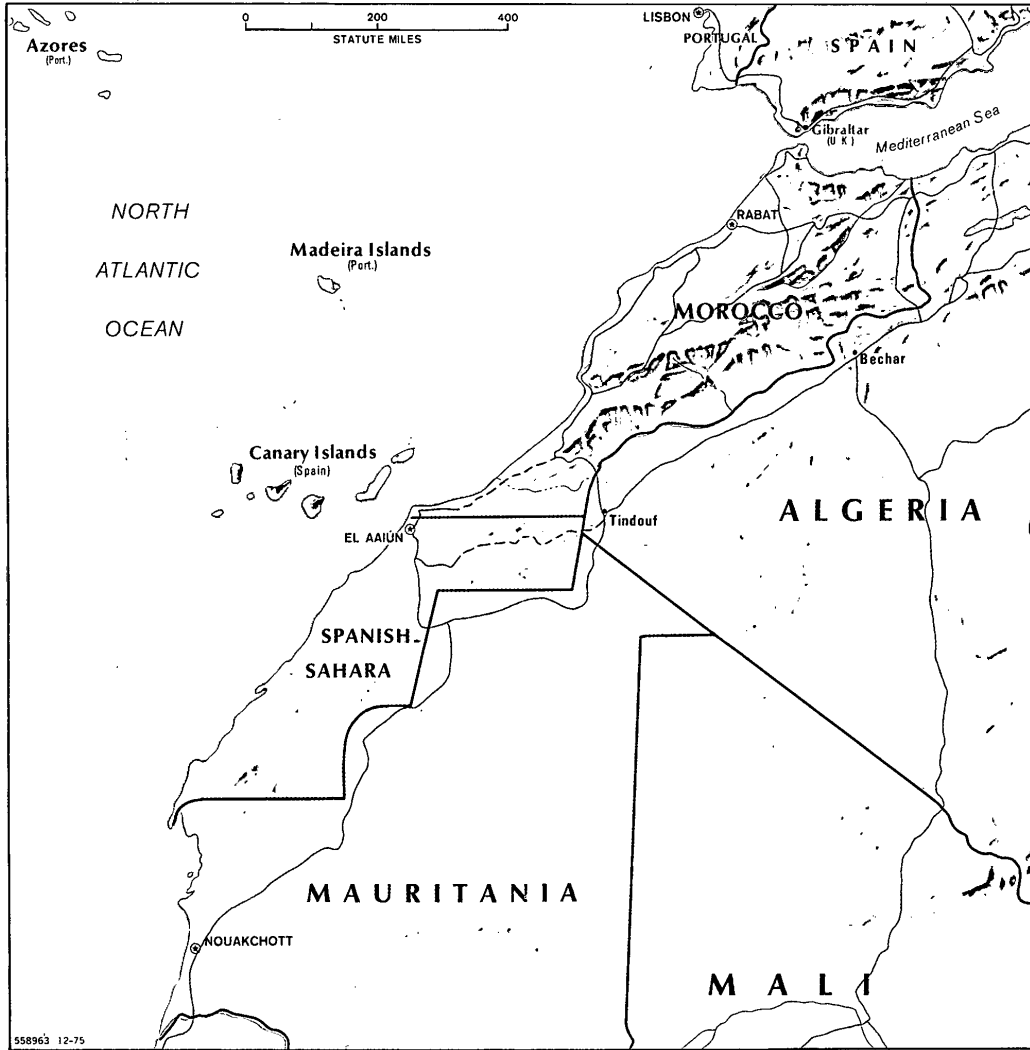
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CUBA



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ALGERIA - SPANISH SAHARA

Algeria is continuing to improve its military posture and reinforce its western border with Morocco and Spanish Sahara.

At present, these actions probably are intended to exert psychological pressure on Rabat and to strengthen Algeria's defensive capabilities as it increases aid to the pro-independence Polisario guerrillas opposing Morocco's move into Spanish Sahara. At the same time, however, the military measures enhance Algiers' ability to take more direct military action.

Algeria has been making a concerted effort to build its military inventory since mid-October when King Hassan announced plans for the mass march into Spanish Sahara. In early November, Algiers reportedly signed a military aid agreement with Moscow worth some \$500 million



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Other recent Algerian actions include:

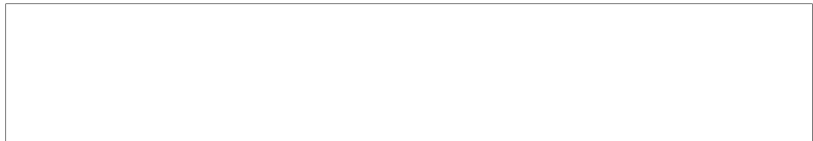
--Placement of cash orders in Paris for tents, medicine, and surgical equipment.

--At least five overflights since December 7 of southern Morocco by Algerian fighter aircraft based at Tindouf.



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--Some reinforcement of troops in the same area; information is fragmentary, however, and the actual extent of the build-up along the border is unknown.



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(continued)

Algerian President Boumediene would like to see the Moroccans bogged down fighting a long and costly insurgency. Economic and social development is Boumediene's number one priority, however, and he is not likely to favor action against Morocco that would require an expensive outlay of resources. Because Algeria has maintained that it has no territorial claim on Sahara, it would be hard pressed to justify any direct military action against Morocco. The Algerians believe that time works in favor of liberation struggles and probably expect the Polisario Front, following the Algerians' example, to bear the brunt of its own struggle for independence.

NOTES

A series of sharp clashes late last week between Thai and Cambodian forces has again raised local tensions on the border.

Publicly, both Bangkok and Phnom Penh are playing down the significance of the incidents in order to keep their newly improved relations on track. The current dispute is almost certainly an isolated incident. Such fighting is symptomatic of the "wild west" atmosphere that pervades the border as the result of rampant smuggling and years of officially inspired hostility by both sides. Local antagonisms undoubtedly will continue to smolder even though the new regimes in Bangkok and Phnom Penh want rapprochement.

* * *

The UN Security Council today may consider Iceland's complaint against Britain following last week's ramming incident inside Iceland's 12-mile limit.

Reaction in Reykjavik to the incident, in which an Icelandic patrol boat was rammed by a British support ship, has been predictably sharp. Prime Minister Hallgrimsson said the affair was "unusually serious" and demonstrated British "recklessness and violence." Most officials are responding more stridently to this incident than to previous cod war skirmishes because it occurred within Iceland's 12-mile zone, which Britain recognizes.

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