

The President's Daily Brief

January 6, 1976

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Top Secret

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Exempt from general
declassification schedule of E.O. 11652
exemption category 58(1)(2),(3)
declassified only on approval of
the Director of Central Intelligence

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

LEBANON

Lebanese Prime Minister Karami's call yesterday for indefinite postponement of parliamentary elections is likely to prompt Lebanese leftists to start a new round of fighting. The far left stands to win a number of seats in parliament if elections are held on schedule between February and April.

Beirut is relatively calm. Renewed clashes could easily be triggered, however, by the numerous kidnappings and efforts by the Christian militias to search trucks bringing food to the Palestinian refugee camps.

The timing of elections can be changed by the president, prime minister, and parliament. Each has an interest in delaying a vote because of the continuing civil unrest and the growth of leftist political power in Lebanon.

Karami's call may reflect a private understanding between old-line Muslim and Christian leaders. Such Muslims as Karami and former prime minister Saib Salam fear the loss of their seats to radical leftists if elections are held soon.

The Christians fear that election of a more radical and assertive parliament would jeopardize the subsequent election by parliament of an acceptably conservative successor to President Franjiyah. His term expires in September, and a presidential election--unlike that of parliament--cannot be constitutionally postponed.

The Christians may also calculate that extension of the tenure of the existing parliament would allow them to delay concessions providing for equal Christian and Muslim representation in that body. Christians now have a six to five majority in the 99-member legislature.

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Muslim and Palestinian leaders have reacted so far with restraint to the Christians' rejection last week of the Syrian-sponsored political reforms proposed last month. The Muslims issued a low-key statement condemning the Maronites but repeated their own willingness to negotiate a settlement.

Muslim restraint probably results partly from efforts of the Christian Phalanges Party to dissociate itself from calls by ultraconservative Christians for the partition of Lebanon into Christian and Muslim states.



CUBA-ANGOLA

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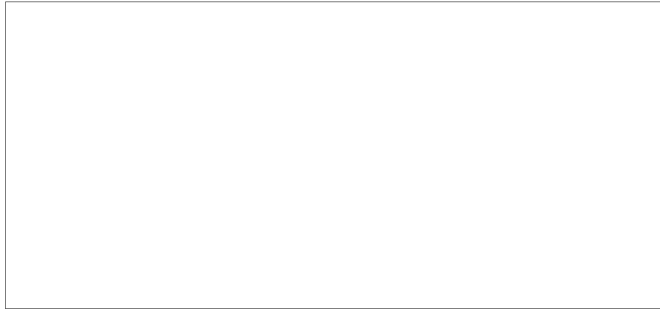


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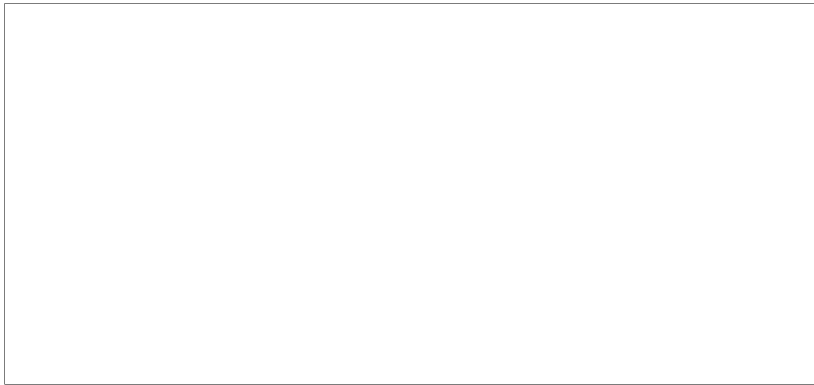
Libya on Sunday became the 18th member of the Organization of African Unity formally recognizing the government established by the Angolan Popular Movement. The Qadhafi regime related its decision to South African assistance to the Popular Movement's rivals.

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

USSR



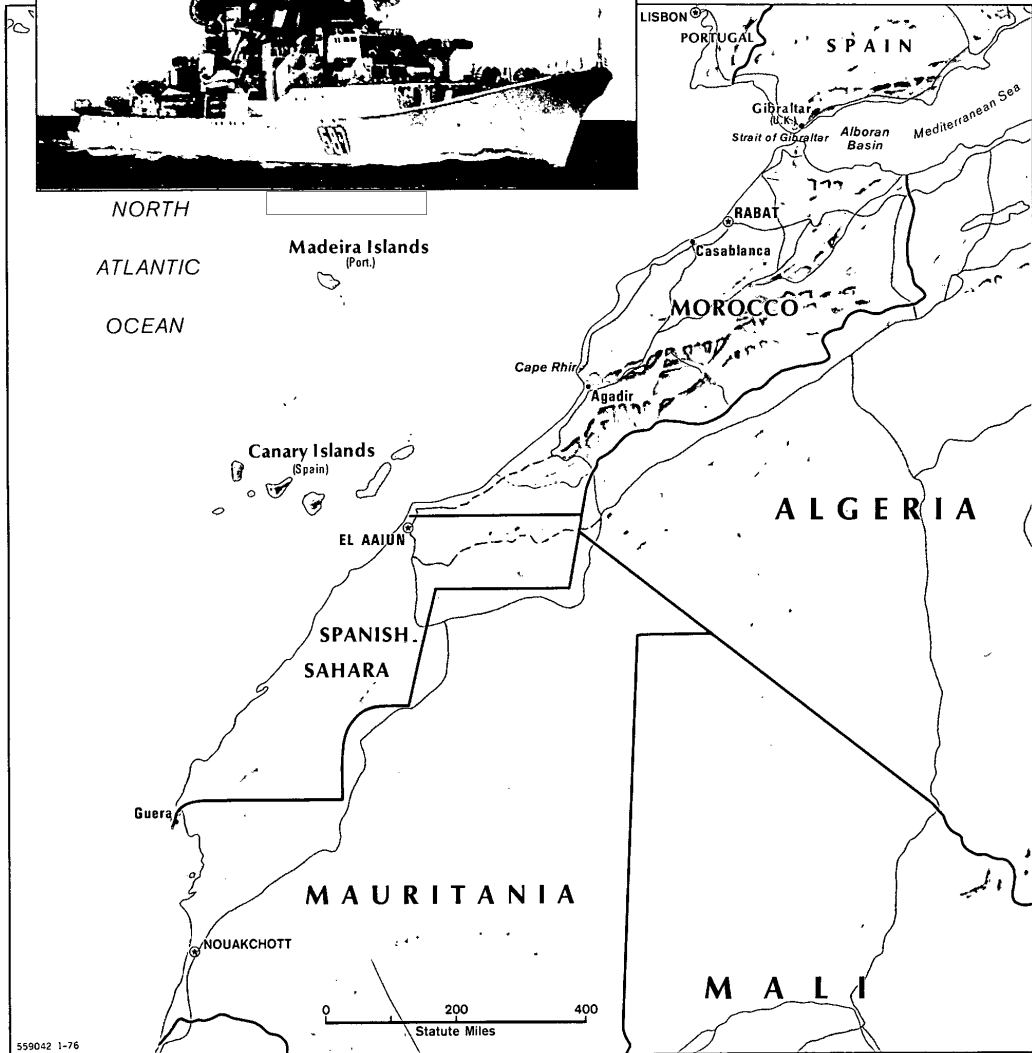
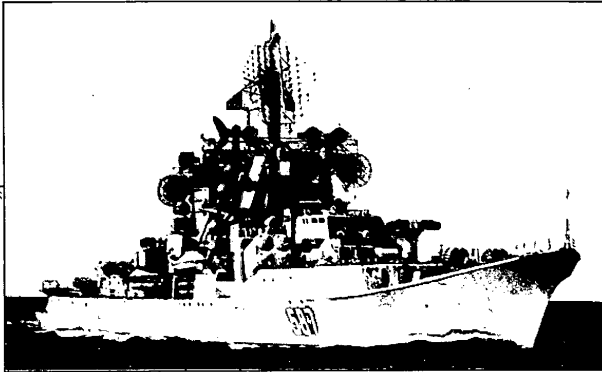
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Soviet Kresta II-class guided missile cruiser



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NOTES

A Soviet guided-missile cruiser has left the Mediterranean for the Atlantic, apparently in response to Morocco's seizure of a Soviet ship.

Rabat has announced that a Soviet ship was intercepted off the coast of Spanish Sahara on Saturday and subsequently escorted to the port of Agadir. Three Algerian officers and a quantity of arms reportedly were found aboard. The Moroccan news agency asserted that the ship was bound for Spanish Sahara to deliver arms to the Algerian-backed Polisario Front.

[Redacted]

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The report may in fact refer to a Soviet fishing trawler that was escorted to Agadir on December 30.

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Syria, hoping to obtain the broadest possible backing, apparently is planning to support the adoption of a low-key resolution when the UN Security Council debates the Middle East problem next week.

[Redacted] the Palestine Liberation Organization may push for a resolution on the Palestinian question much like those approved by the General Assembly in 1974 and 1975. Although both the Syrians and the PLO probably expect a US veto, they hope that couching their demands in temperate language will cause the US some embarrassment and create further strains between Washington and Tel Aviv.

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The Thai government's announcement yesterday that it would freeze rice prices "for the time being" defuses, at least temporarily, one potentially serious political problem for the Khukrit cabinet.

Proposed increases in rice and sugar prices had prompted a labor protest rally that reportedly attracted some 10,000 persons. The prospect of larger turnouts may have forced the government to retreat from its decision to raise the prices on January 15.

* * *

Nigeria's price hike of its high-quality oil could add \$130 million annually to the US oil import bill.

On December 30, Lagos informed foreign oil companies that as of January 1 the average cost of Nigerian oil would increase by 40 cents per barrel. This increase is in addition to the \$1.20 raise enacted in October as part of the 10-percent hike decreed by OPEC. Lagos felt the hike was justified for high-quality crudes because OPEC--at its December 20 meeting--had not adequately reduced prices on lower quality oil, for which demand has fallen.

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