

The President's Daily Brief

March 16, 1976

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LEBANON

Brigadier Ahdab's backers are divided about what to do next now that their effort to oust President Franjiyah has bogged down. Syria is reportedly trying to put together another political solution.

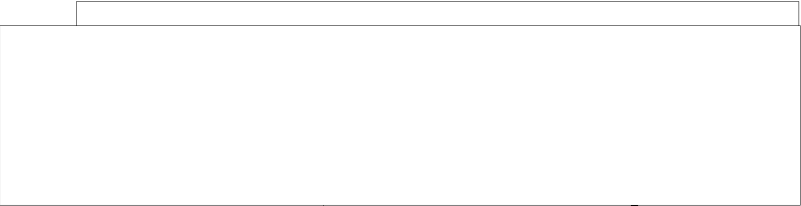
Some of Ahdab's supporters want to try to dislodge Franjiyah by force, but others, including the mainline fedayeen and Palestine Liberation Army forces, fear this would lead to a new round of heavy fighting. Ahdab's followers also cannot agree on whether to establish a new governing body, such as the military command council promised last week.

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According to a Beirut newspaper with good contacts in Syria, Assad is attempting to put together a package agreement that would provide for a general amnesty, reconstruction of the Lebanese army under the high command, and a new civilian government without Franjiyah. If no political solution is found, it is likely that the situation will deteriorate steadily toward civil war again. This almost certainly would lead to an attempt by the Christians to partition the country and possibly to direct military intervention by Syria.

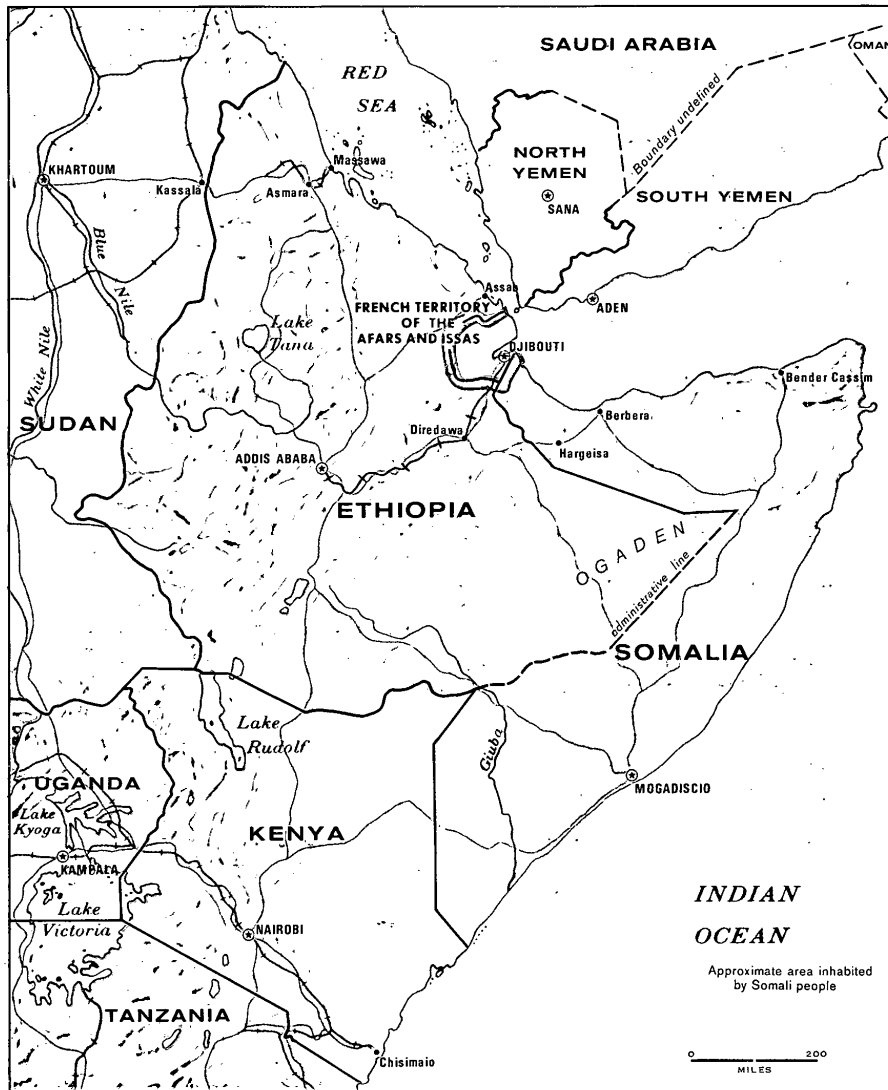
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Israeli aircraft were active on reconnaissance missions in the area yesterday.

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The Horn of Africa



FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

HORN OF AFRICA

We present below conclusions from a Special National Intelligence Estimate entitled "Prospects for and Implications of Conflict in the Horn of Africa Over the Next Year or So." The estimate was issued yesterday after telephonic approval by the members of the US Intelligence Board.

The odds are at least even that France will decide within the next year or so to withdraw its military forces from the French Territory of Afars and Issas (FTAI). If that happens, open military conflict between Somalia and Ethiopia is likely to erupt soon thereafter.*

- Somalia alleges that it supports independence for the FTAI, but in reality it is determined to pursue its historical aim of annexing the territory. (The Issas, who constitute about half of the population, are ethnic Somalis.)
- Ethiopia is equally determined to prevent Somalia from dominating the FTAI and its main port of Djibouti, the terminus of Ethiopia's only important rail link to the sea.

There is only a slender chance that war could be avoided through a diplomatic solution that included: external restraints (from other Africans, Arabs, and the superpowers); French revamping of the FTAI government to make it acceptable to both the Issas and Afars and to regional states with an interest in the problem; and a continuing French military presence.

**The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force, believes that this judgment is too weak and that if the French withdraw within the next year or so, open military conflict will almost certainly erupt soon thereafter.*

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The Somalis in coming months will probably instigate an expanded campaign of subversion and political violence in the FTAI designed to weaken France's will to keep a pro-French regime in power or to guarantee an independent state's territorial integrity.

--Rather than commit its troops against a sustained insurgency, France is likely to accelerate its withdrawal after attempting to devise a face-saving arrangement.

--A French withdrawal, in turn, would encourage Somalia to seize the territory by open force.

The USSR would like to avoid a war in the Horn. It is probably counseling Somali President Siad against precipitous military action, urging him instead to rely on a combination of political pressure and subversion to achieve Somali objectives. Nevertheless, we believe that Siad himself will favor a more aggressive policy and that Moscow will feel compelled to support him.

Ethiopia would undoubtedly go to war to block Somalia's territorial ambitions. Such a war would probably unfold as follows:

--A Somali attack would result in the capture of Djibouti and some other parts of the FTAI in the initial days of fighting.

--Ethiopian forces, though larger than those of Somalia, are already stretched thin combating domestic insurgencies and would have no more than an even chance of dislodging the Somalis.

--Neither side would be able to end the war decisively, and a military stalemate would result after several weeks of fighting. There would be pressure from the conservative Arabs and the OAU for a cease-fire.

The Soviet Union (and Cuba) would probably provide new aid to Somalia in this situation, although the decision to do so would not be an easy one. Moscow would probably simultaneously seek to limit the conflict and try to find a political solution that would satisfy minimum Somali and Ethiopian requirements.

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The US would be faced with the problem of how to respond to the Soviet move without appearing to abandon a friendly country and to allow Moscow to achieve a significant military and diplomatic advantage in yet another part of Africa.

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NOTES

The Soviet Union's initial response to Egypt's abrogation of their friendship treaty, issued yesterday by Tass, appeared to be a holding statement until Moscow has studied the situation more fully.

The Tass release described President Sadat's action as a new manifestation of an "unfriendly" policy toward the USSR that the Egyptian leader has been pursuing. Implying that Moscow may play down the Egyptian move, Tass stated that the treaty had not been functioning for some time and reiterated that the USSR will continue to work for friendly relations with Cairo and the Egyptian people.

An earlier Arabic broadcast from Moscow seemed to appeal to the Egyptian military, asserting that domestic forces were responsible for weaknesses in Egypt's current military capability.

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India and Canada initialed a nuclear aid agreement on March 6, which will commit India not to test within 15 months of the date of the treaty's ratification.

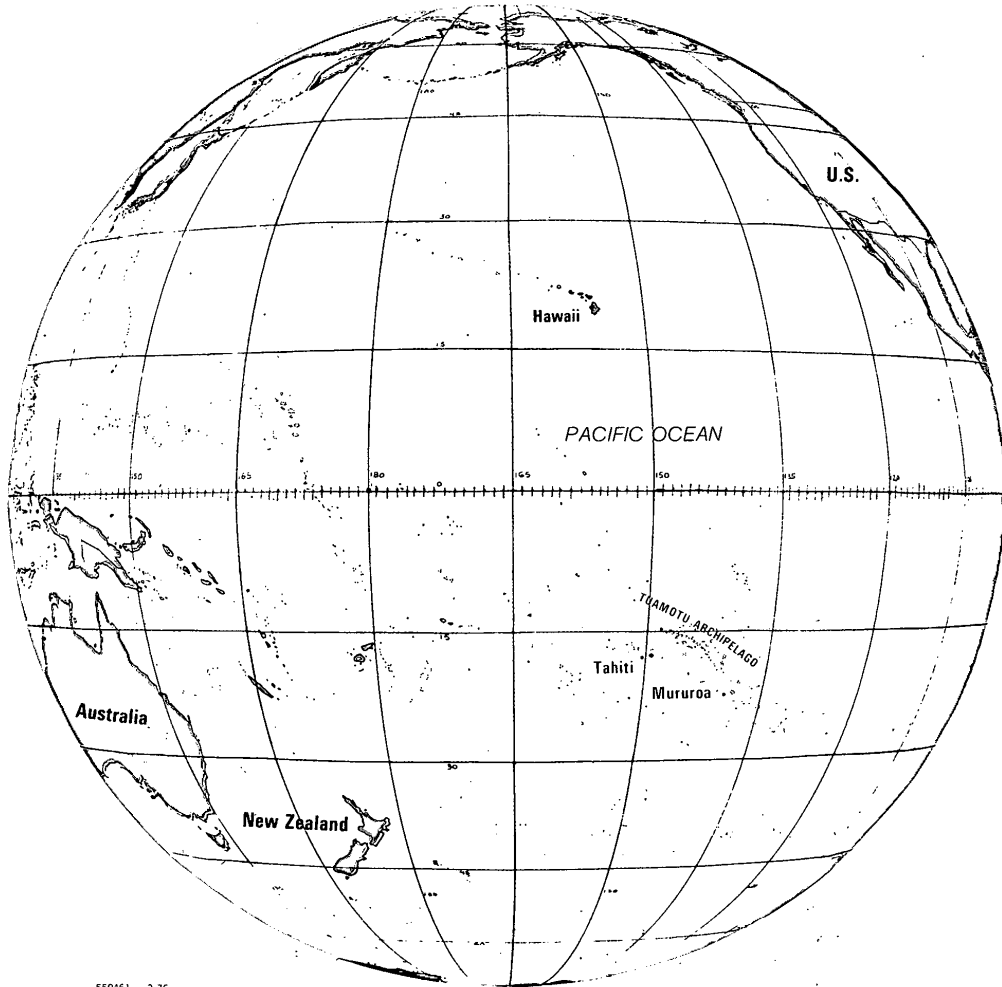
The agreement calls for resumption of Canadian assistance for the Rajasthan Nuclear Power Project. The Indians have accepted Canada's safeguards requirements and have given an oral assurance that India does not intend to export explosive material or technology.

India has been conducting site surveys in preparation for a second nuclear test. New Delhi apparently intends to test again and may well be in a position to do so after the 15 months have elapsed, or even earlier if the agreement should not be ratified.

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French South Pacific Test Center



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Niger President Kountche and his supporters apparently remain concerned about the extent of military support for dissidents following yesterday's coup attempt.

Our embassy in Niamey reports that fighting yesterday morning was heavy, suggesting that the coup attempt had significant backing. President Kountche said in a radio broadcast yesterday that the coup leaders are under arrest.

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