



The President's Daily Brief

April 1, 1976

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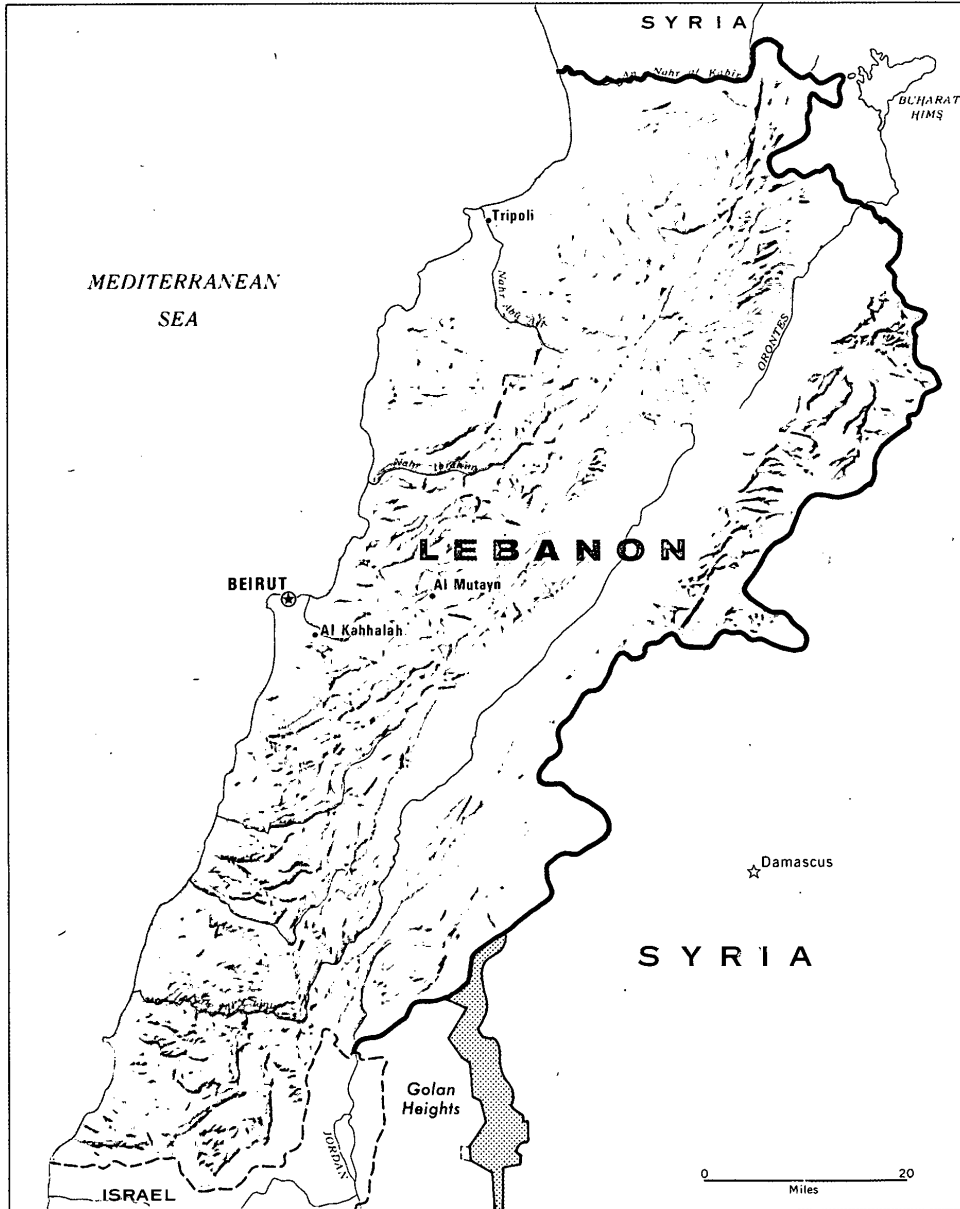
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LEBANON

Leftist leader Kamal Jumblatt is still defying Syria's demand for a cease-fire despite signs that the leftists' drive may be losing momentum. Jumblatt now seems bent as much on preventing the resumption of Syrian mediation as on securing President Franjyah's resignation.

After meeting again yesterday with PLO chairman Yasir Arafat, Jumblatt appealed to leftist sympathizers in the Syrian government to persuade President Asad to lift the embargo on arms for the Lebanese leftists. He also rebuked Damascus for introducing regular troops into Lebanon.

Jumblatt apparently fears that the Syrians intend to thwart the leftists' efforts to obtain concessions from the Christians not contained in the political settlement worked out by Franjyah and Asad in mid-February.

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The Syrians seem resigned to waiting a while longer to see whether Arafat can change Jumblatt's mind. There were no indications yesterday of unusual activity by Syrian forces and the likelihood

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of open Syrian intervention appears to be fading. The British and French have now weighed in along with the US in cautioning the Syrians not to intervene.

In the fighting, meanwhile, the Christians slightly improved their position yesterday, especially in the mountains east of Beirut. Their forces reportedly recaptured parts of Kahhalah and repulsed a leftist counterattack. They also retook the village of Al Mutayn. In Beirut, the battlelines are static.

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GREECE--TURKEY

The Caramanlis government seems inclined--in reacting to the new US-Turkish Defense Cooperation Agreement--to avoid any moves that might hurt Greece's chances to receive military assistance comparable to that provided for Turkey under the accord. Neither does Athens want to take any action that might backfire and lead to additional support for the agreement in the US Congress.

In an exchange with a US embassy official on Tuesday, Caramanlis described the agreement as a "big mistake." Foreign Minister Bitsios and Coordination Minister Papaligouras, who were also present, said Greece would respond by requesting additional military assistance as well as some type of US guarantee against any possible Turkish aggression.

Neither Caramanlis nor his ministers have tried to make the presence of US bases in Greece dependent on increased military aid. Caramanlis will probably refrain from raising the ante in the base negotiations--which have been going smoothly and are nearing completion--until he has a better idea of the prospects for additional US assistance and guarantees and of the likelihood of Congressional ratification of the agreement with Turkey.

The shrill criticism of the Turkish agreement by the Greek press and opposition could, however, produce another groundswell of anti-Americanism that might force Caramanlis to take a harder line in the negotiations.

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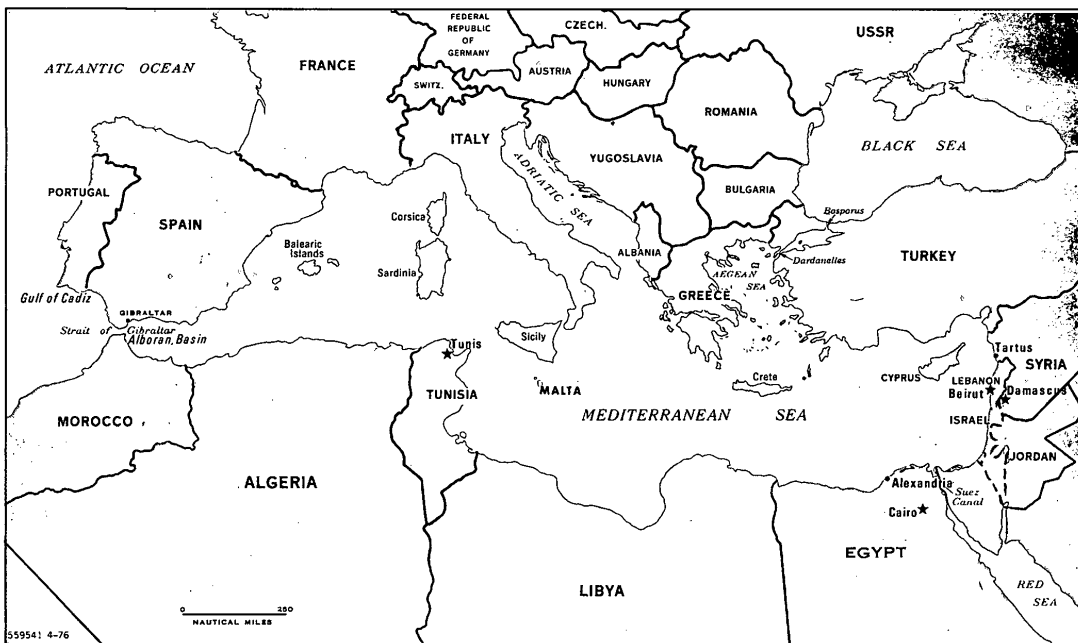
USSR-AFRICA

Moscow evidently is trying to calm apprehension in the West about future Soviet and Cuban actions in southern Africa without forgoing any of its options.

The most visible move was to act as an intermediary with Angola in arranging for the withdrawal of South African troops from Angolan territory. The arrangement provided some substance for Foreign Minister Gromyko's effort last week in London to convey the impression that the USSR was not seeking a confrontation with the West over Namibia or Rhodesia.

This tone of moderation also has characterized the Soviet media coverage of the South African withdrawal, which has been generally low key. Despite the reassuring words, however, there are few signs that the Soviets are urging the Cubans to reduce their presence in Angola any time soon. Indeed, Soviet press treatment of a recent speech by Popular Movement leader Neto highlighted Neto's rejection of suggestions that he reduce his dependence on Soviet and Cuban support.

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NOTES

The Soviets are beginning to concentrate the ships of their Mediterranean Squadron in the eastern part of the sea, but there are no indications that large-scale reinforcement of the squadron is imminent.

The Sverdlov-class cruiser and Kashin destroyer that moved to the eastern Mediterranean last week left Tartus, Syria, late on Tuesday and yesterday afternoon began surveillance of the US naval contingency force located southeast of Crete. A Kashin destroyer, previously located off Tunis, was east of Malta yesterday afternoon, and a Kresta I cruiser passed eastward through the Strait of Sicily yesterday morning. The movement of these units leaves the Soviets with no major surface warships in the Mediterranean west of Sicily.

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Thai voters go to the polls this Sunday for the country's second general election in little over a year.

With 39 political parties competing for 279 seats in the lower house of the National Assembly, there is a strong prospect that the next government will be another weak coalition. Thailand's senior military leaders doubt that a satisfactorily strong government will emerge from the election, but they are assuming a wait-and-see attitude before committing themselves to any course of action.

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