



The President's Daily Brief

May 8, 1976

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~~Top Secret~~

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May 8, 1976

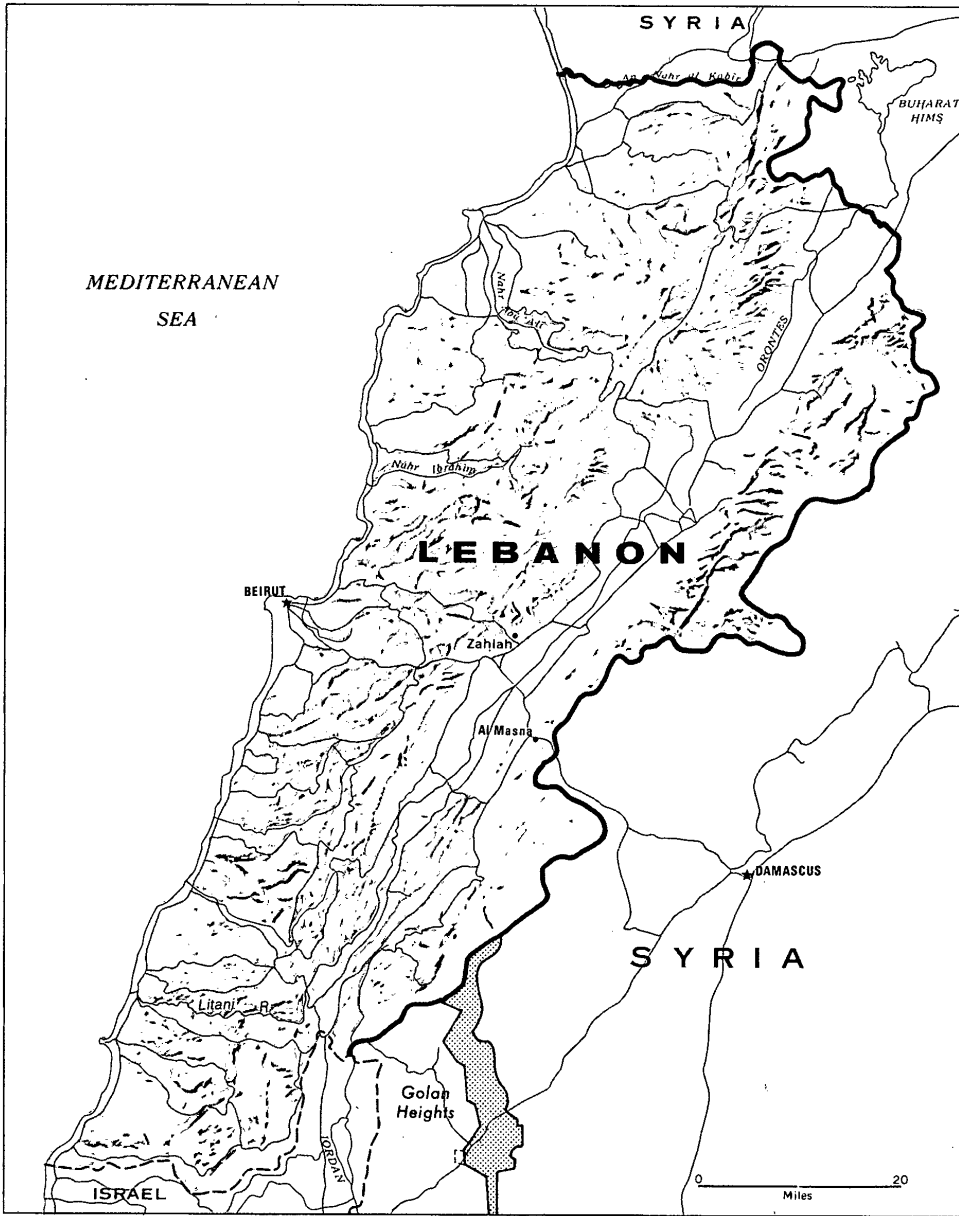
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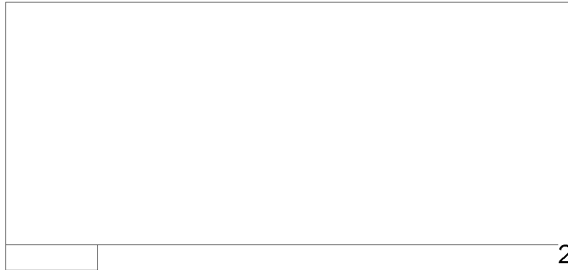
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LEBANON: *Ilyas Sarkis, the candidate backed by the Syrians and the Christian Phalanges Party, seems likely to become the new president today, if the cease-fire holds and parliament can convene for the election.*

Early this morning security in Beirut seemed tight enough, but fighting is heavy in the mountains northeast of the capital and could provoke flare-ups elsewhere.

Leftist leader Kamal Jumblatt failed in his last-minute bid for a postponement of the election. As a result, he and his preferred candidate, Raymond Edde, have announced they will boycott the parliamentary session, which probably means that at least 16 deputies will not participate in the vote.

A simple majority of the 98-member assembly constitutes a quorum, but Edde and Jumblatt--exploiting an ambiguity in the constitution--argue that two thirds of the membership is required for the presidential vote.



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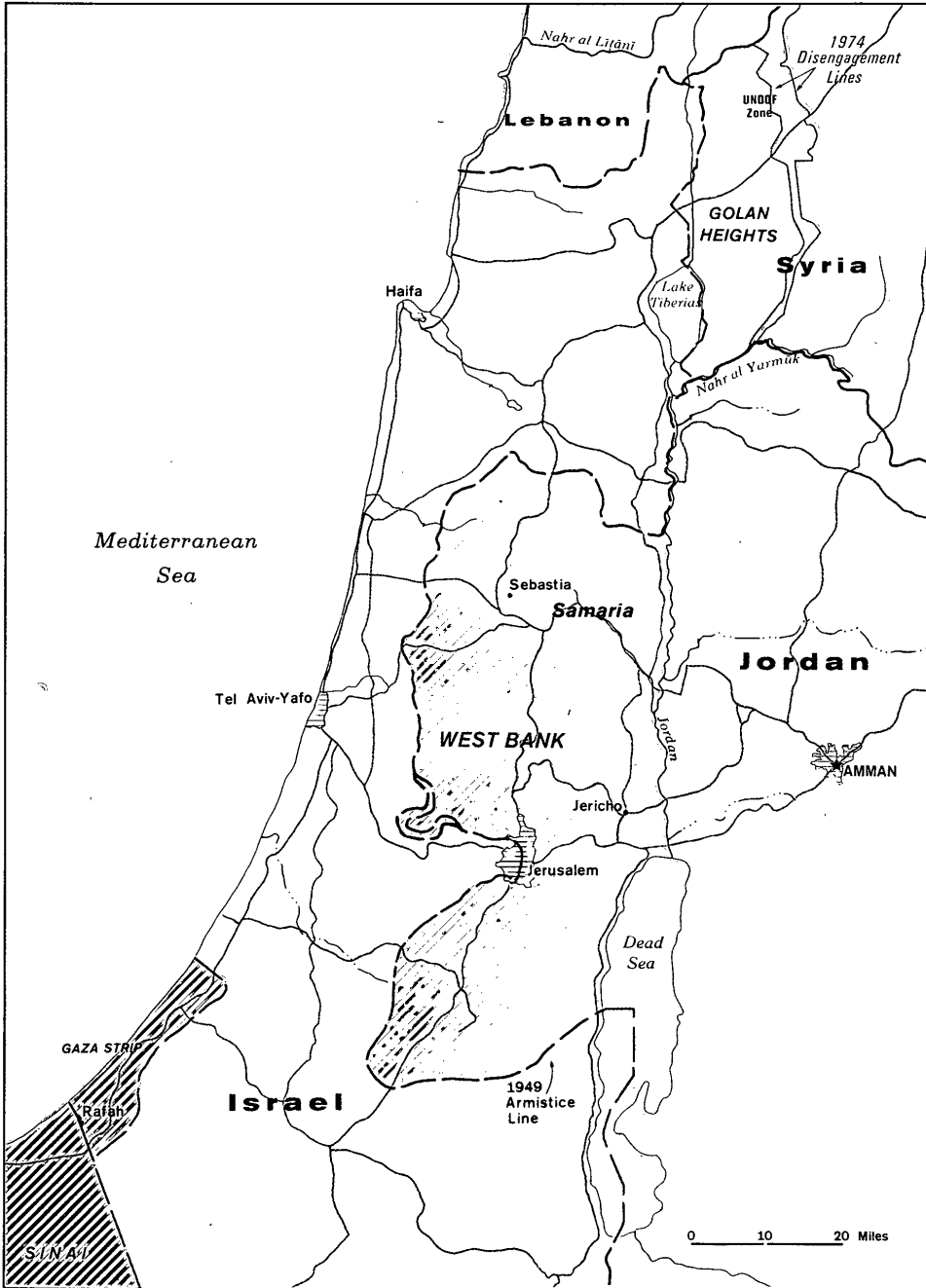
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ISRAEL: *Prime Minister Rabin's coalition probably will remain intact after the cabinet's policy debate tomorrow regarding Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, but the debate itself will produce further tensions among the Arab population.*

The National Religious Party has threatened to leave the coalition if the government tries to evict some 100 squatters who have set up an unauthorized settlement in Samaria. The left-wing Mapam Party has threatened to vote against the government if the squatters are not evicted.

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Rabin has been working on a compromise that will offer the Samaria settlers the option of moving to an authorized site elsewhere in the occupied territories. It stands a reasonable chance of being accepted by the coalition.

Whatever the outcome, the Arabs are likely to view the debate as further proof that Israel is bent on establishing a permanent Jewish presence in the occupied territories, and more Arab protest demonstrations are certain.

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NOTES

Jordanian King Husayn will be in Damascus today for one of his periodic policy consultations with Syrian President Asad.

The two leaders are likely to discuss Husayn's recent trip to the US, the Lebanese situation, and Syria's attitude toward renewing the mandate of the UN observer forces on the Golan Heights. The present mandate expires on May 30.

They may also discuss the current status of the Jordan-US Hawk missile deal. The visit to Jordan later this month of the chief of the Soviet air force was officially announced in Amman yesterday. The visit is intended to be another warning that Husayn could turn to the USSR if the deal with the US fails.

The press has speculated that Husayn and Asad might announce plans for a confederation between Jordan and Syria. Such a step would be only symbolic, if it occurs at all.

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Egypt

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*Laos reaffirmed its in-
creasingly strong ties
with the USSR at the
end of Prime Minister
Kayson Phomvihane's
visit to Moscow on May
5.*

During the two-week visit the two sides signed a series of accords, probably including a new Soviet aid commitment. The extent of new aid was not revealed, but in the communique the Lao extravagantly praised the Soviets for their assistance and support. None of this will help Laos' relations with China.

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