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The President's Daily Brief



May 24, 1976

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May 24, 1976

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

LEBANON: *The de facto cease-fire that settled over much of the country last week held through the weekend.*

There were several incidents in Beirut and the eastern city of Zahlah, but both Christians and Muslims seem prepared to give president-elect Sarkis more time to work out a new truce proposal. Sarkis believes the current grace period may last only another 10 days.

The main problem holding up implementation of a formal cease-fire apparently involves the selection of individuals to participate in "roundtable" settlement talks. Leftist leader Kamal Jumblatt wants to ensure that his leftist coalition has a numerical edge at the negotiating table. He also wants to exclude his long-standing opponent on the Christian side, Phalanges Party leader Pierre Jumayyil. This kind of maneuvering could delay the proceedings and result in new violence.

French President Giscard's offer to send French troops to Lebanon has elicited a predictably mixed reaction from the Lebanese. Jumblatt and Prime Minister Rashid Karami flatly rejected the proposal, and the Christians generally have reacted favorably. The French have made clear their willingness from the beginning of the trouble to act as mediators. The opposition of Jumblatt and Karami, however, and, more important, Syria's reluctance to share its guardian role in Lebanon rule out serious consideration of Giscard's offer at this time.

Syria's policy in Lebanon was sharply criticized by Egypt this weekend in what may have been an

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effort by Cairo to scuttle Saudi- and Kuwaiti-sponsored attempts to reconcile Syrian and Egyptian differences. The Egyptian comments were made just before President Sadat met with Saudi and Kuwaiti officials who have been attempting to reschedule the reconciliation meeting between Cairo and Damascus.

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USSR - WEST GERMANY:

The USSR on Saturday issued an unusual, formal government statement condemning "certain forces" in West Germany that have been critical of "detente."

Although specific references were limited to West German - Soviet issues, the scope of the document was broad enough to constitute a rebuttal of all Western critics of a relaxation of international tensions. It rejected as false the contentions that Moscow alone is benefiting from a relaxation of tension and that the USSR has embarked on expansionism and ideological colonialism. The document said that the USSR's military buildup is not exceeding its defensive needs.

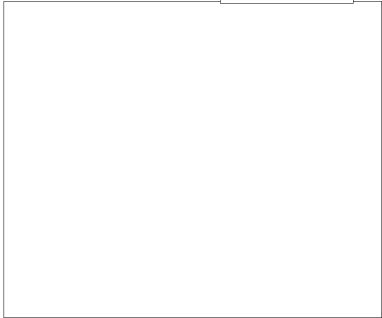
It also attacked attempts to use "detente" to seek changes in Soviet domestic policy and indicated that a relaxation of tension does not preclude Soviet support for "liberation" movements.

The statement reminded West Germans that recent years have seen a sharp growth in bilateral trade with the USSR and that better relations with Moscow have enabled Bonn to improve its ties with Eastern Europe. It concluded by calling on West German critics of "detente" to define their country's alternatives.

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USSR-JORDAN:



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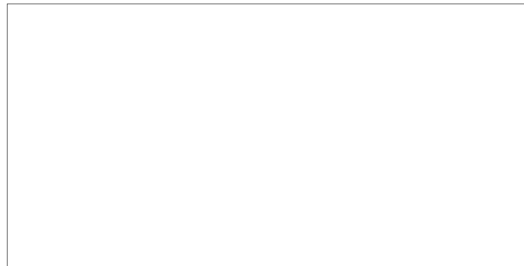


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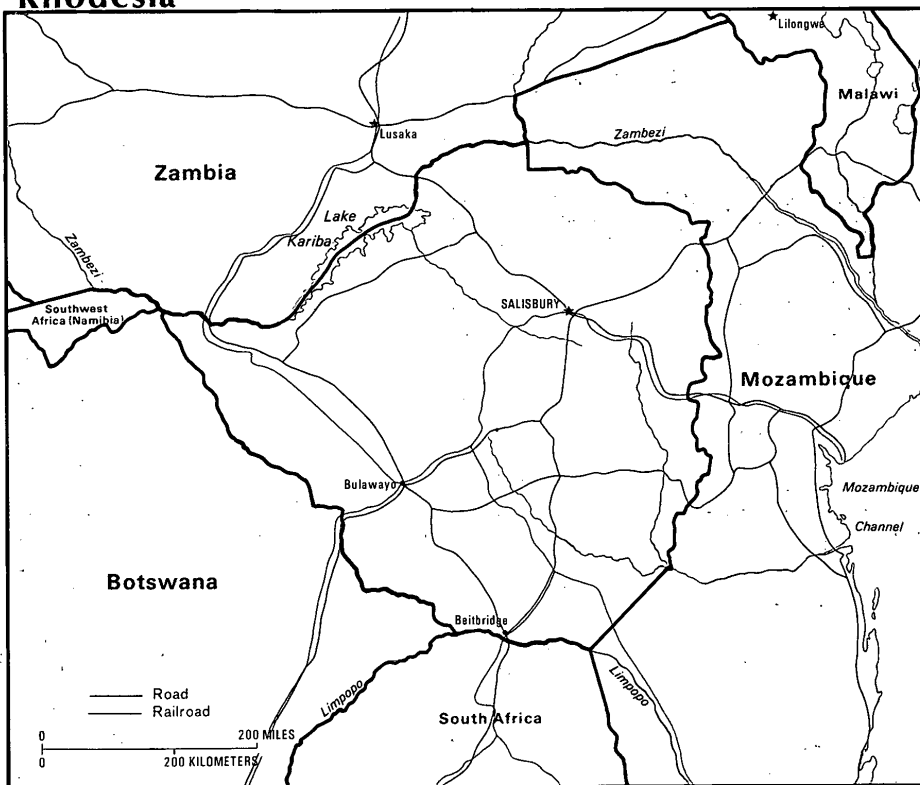


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Rhodesia



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NOTES

An insurgent attack this weekend on one of Rhodesia's two major road links with South Africa is further evidence of efforts by the guerrillas to step up their activities.

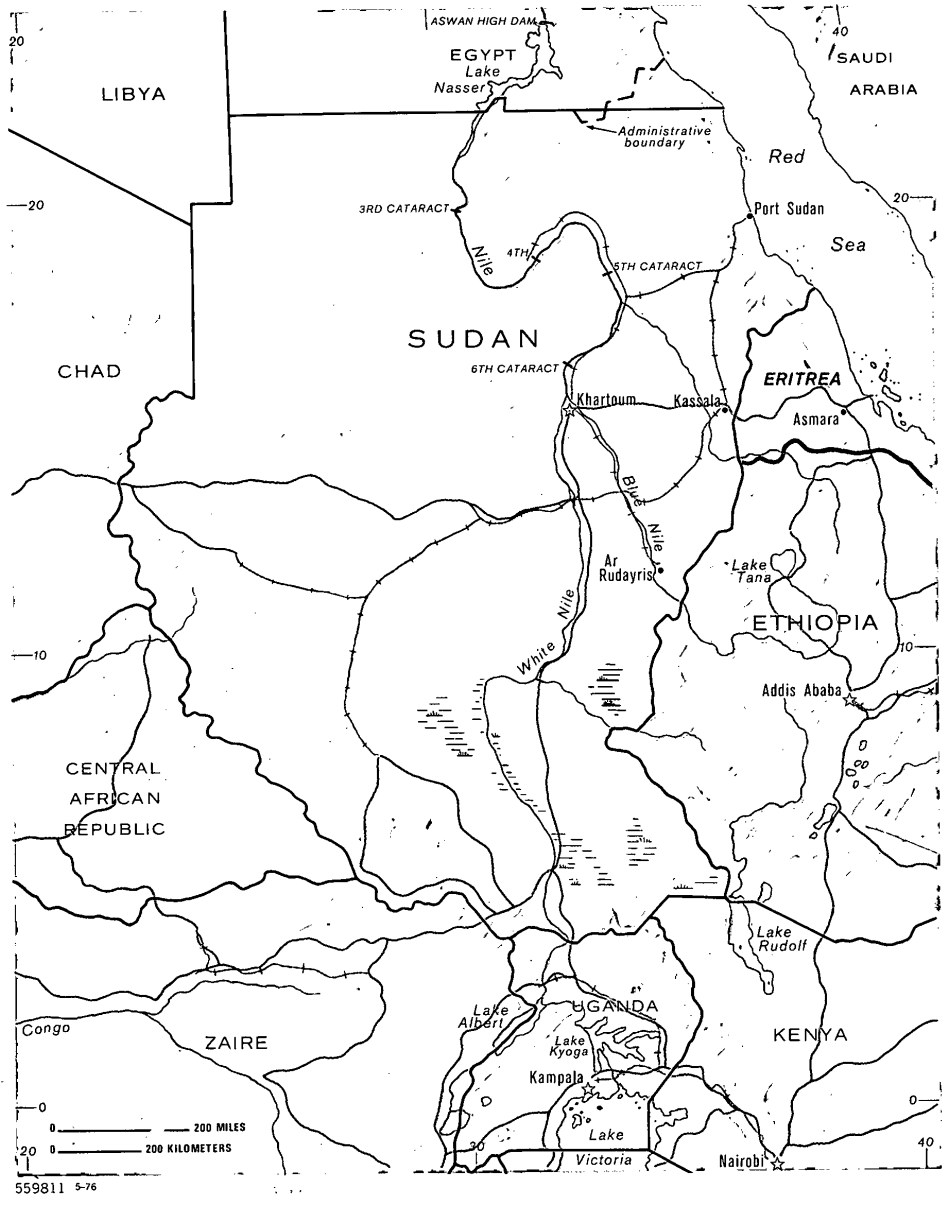
The incident follows a similar attack late last month on the other main road to the border. In the latest incident, two cars were damaged on the road that runs from Bulawayo, Rhodesia's second largest city, to Beitbridge, the main border crossing point. Armed convoys now will be used to protect civilian traffic on this road as well as on the other main road.

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UN Secretary General Waldheim plans to visit Syria this week to urge Damascus to agree to extend the mandate of the UN peacekeeping force in the Golan Heights.

In recent weeks, primarily because of its preoccupation with events in Lebanon, Damascus has seemed to be seeking a face-saving device to justify renewing the mandate rather than cause another full-scale Council debate on Middle East issues. Waldheim reportedly is justifying his trip as providing the means for the Syrians to "save face." He may be promoting the visit, however, to emphasize his continued desire for personal involvement in Middle East negotiations.

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Sudan is taking defensive measures as its fears heighten that Ethiopia's offensive against Eritrean rebels will lead to fighting between the two countries.

According to the Sudanese military attache in Addis Ababa, conflict between the two countries is likely because of Khartoum's support for the Eritrean rebels. Intercepted Ethiopian military messages indicate that the Sudanese military buildup in the border area is continuing. We continue to believe that Ethiopia will try to avoid violating Sudanese territory, but there still could be some incidents.

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