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The President's Daily Brief

July 16, 1976

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Lebanon



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LEBANON: *Palestine Liberation Organization chief Yasir Arafat apparently has made his visit to Damascus for talks conditional on Syrian withdrawal from both Sidon and Sawfar.*

Syrian proposals to Arafat and the Palestinian leadership reportedly were brought from Damascus yesterday by Libyan Prime Minister Jallud. Damascus stipulated that only after relations between Syria and the Palestinians had returned to what they were in the past--presumably a reference to previous restrictions on Palestinian activity--would Syrian forces "concentrate in specific areas."

According to the reported proposals, Syria would not withdraw completely from Lebanese territory until Lebanese factions had been reconciled and the country's institutions were once again functioning. The Syrians nevertheless were willing to begin by withdrawing from Sidon and Sawfar. After this pullback, talks could take place between the Syrian government and Palestinian leaders.

The Syrian withdrawal from Sidon began Wednesday. Sudanese and Libyan contingents apparently are supervising operation of the port. Palestinian sources stated yesterday afternoon that the Syrians had also begun to pull back from Sawfar.

These gestures by Syria may be sufficient to persuade Arafat that a trip to Damascus can be undertaken without loss of face.

The full extent of the Syrian pullback is not clear. Damascus will almost certainly remain in position for a hasty return should negotiations fall through.

Syria probably feels it can lose nothing by making an effort to probe Arafat's willingness to reach an accommodation.

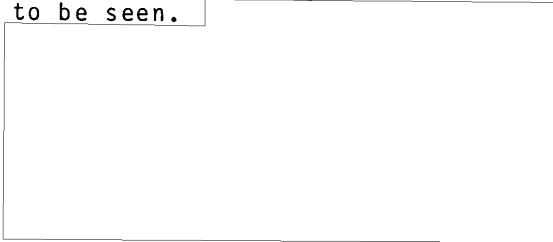
Whether Arafat can bring the rest of the Palestinians, let alone the

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leftist Lebanese leadership, along with him should he reach an understanding with the Syrians remains to be seen.

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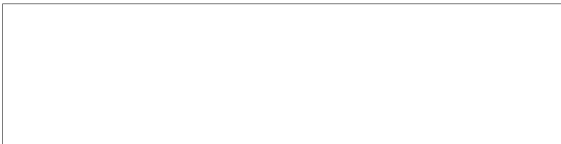
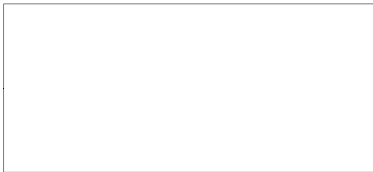
Syria meanwhile shows no disposition to relax its pressure on leftist and Palestinian forces in the Tripoli area.

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Syrian forces are tightening the ring around Nahr al-Barid refugee camp north of Tripoli, possibly in preparation for an assault.

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A leftist Beirut newspaper reports the USSR has suspended shipments of arms, ammunition, and spare parts to Syria until the Syrians withdraw their troops from Lebanon.

We have no confirmation of this report, and we view it with skepticism. The Soviets have refused to provide Damascus with emergency financial assistance to support the intervention. We doubt they would go so far as to cut off all arms shipments, although they might delay some shipments to indicate their displeasure.

Moscow recently approached Damascus for expanded naval and air facilities in Syria. Cutting off arms supplies would leave the Soviet

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Union little chance of obtaining these facilities and might jeopardize those now available to Moscow.

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UK-KENYA: *The UK will airlift considerable ammunition to Kenya this week, according to the US embassy in London.*

The shipments--to include 50,000 anti-aircraft rounds, 3,000 mortar rounds, and 30,000 cannon rounds for Nairobi's Hawker Hunter fighters--will bolster Kenya's air defense and anti-armor capability against Uganda's larger, more heavily equipped forces.

The UK reportedly delivered more than 100 howitzers to Kenya earlier this month. These may be part of the \$46 million military assistance package that has been under negotiation for several months.

London wants to restrict news of the airlift so as not to jeopardize the safety of some 500 British nationals resident in Uganda. Some British citizens are reportedly leaving, but there is no indication that all are trying to do so. The Callaghan government would be likely to take a stronger stand toward Uganda if the British community could get out on its own.

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EGYPT:

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Apparently as a means of keeping the military completely divorced

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from politics, the People's Assembly this week passed a government-sponsored bill that disenfranchises the military and the police. Presidential and parliamentary elections are scheduled for October.



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With members of the military now deprived of the vote as a means of communicating their grievances, some of them could be tempted to use extra-legal means.

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VIETNAM - SOUTHEAST

ASIA: Hanoi is taking a decidedly more flexible and conciliatory line in dealing with its Southeast Asian neighbors now that formal reunification of Vietnam is complete.

Remarks by Vietnamese officials suggest that Hanoi may even be softening its rhetorical support for insurgencies in neighboring countries.

Vietnam's new "moderation" already has produced some limited commitments of economic assistance from its neighbors. The Vietnamese would like to reduce their reliance on the USSR and China and probably calculate that a more pragmatic approach might even pave the way for eventual assistance from the US.

The joint Vietnamese-Philippine communique issued in Manila Monday indicates that Hanoi has tempered

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and in some cases eliminated demands that had frustrated past negotiations. Hanoi has, for example, dropped its demand for the return of war materiel brought into the Philippines shortly after the fall of Saigon.

The Manila communique also promises that neither party will permit its territory to be used for "aggression" against the other. Manila may think this provision strengthens its argument in the current negotiation of the US bases agreement that Filipinos should be given veto power over US military activities staged from the bases.

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South Africa
Rhodesia

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Soviet naval strength in the Mediterranean, which had risen to over 70 units last month, has returned to a normal level.

There are now about 50 ships and submarines in the Mediterranean, somewhat below the usual level. The high number of Soviet naval units in the Mediterranean last month was attributable to a series of exercises held in the area, extensive turnover operations as new units arrived to replace others due to return to the USSR, and Soviet surveillance of US naval activity in the eastern Mediterranean during the evacuation of US civilians from Lebanon.

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