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# The President's Daily Brief

*October 2, 1976*

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*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

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Table of Contents

Lebanon: Christian forces began their attack yesterday on Alayh, one of two remaining Palestinian-leftist strongholds on the Beirut-Damascus highway. (Page 1)

USSR - Middle East: The USSR's proposal for a resumption this month or next of the Geneva conference on the Middle East may have been prompted both by Secretary Kissinger's diplomatic shuttle in southern Africa and the sudden opening of the Syrian military offensive in Lebanon. (Page 2)

Egypt-Libya:  Both Egypt and Libya have recently received deliveries of military equipment-- Egypt from China and Libya from the USSR. (Page 3) 25X1

USSR-Egypt: A Soviet naval tug has returned to the Gulf of Solum anchorage, just outside Egyptian territorial waters. (Page 5)

Angola: The Angolan government is conducting a major military operation against National Union insurgents near the Namibian border. (Page 5)

Notes: France; USSR-Uganda (Page 7)



25X1

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

LEBANON: *Christian forces yesterday began their attack on Alayh, one of two remaining Palestinian-leftist strongholds on the Beirut-Damascus highway.*

The Christians are now moving on Alayh from the north. Syrian forces that moved south from their operations in the mountains have limited their support for the Alayh operation to artillery attacks on the town. They have also encircled Bhamdun, the second leftist stronghold on the highway.

Operations against both Alayh and Bhamdun will probably be more difficult than the two-day mountain offensive. Both towns are similar in size to Sidon, where the Syrians suffered costly losses earlier this year before abandoning their attempt to take it.

The mountain towns seized this week were largely empty, whereas Alayh and Bhamdun are still inhabited. Most of the Palestinian forces driven from the mountains have moved into Alayh and apparently intend to put up stiff resistance.

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*The Palestine Liberation Organization rejected Syria's terms for a cease-fire late on Thursday and vowed to fight on.*



There are growing indications of frayed relations between Palestinian and leftist forces over the leftists' conduct during the Syrian offensive this week.

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*Syria is apparently trying to associate President Sarkis with its offensive, although Sarkis has tried privately to make clear that he had nothing to do with it.*

Damascus radio yesterday broadcast a press conference given by a commander of the Syrian-sponsored "Vanguards of the Lebanese Army" who asserted that his forces had taken the town of Aynturah on the explicit orders of Sarkis. Actually, Syrian forces had captured the town.

The direct association of Sarkis with the mountain offensive will further embarrass the President. He is already under pressure from leftists to take a stand against the Syrian presence in Lebanon, and this latest development will reinforce the Palestinians' suspicion that he is merely a tool of Syria.

USSR - MIDDLE EAST:

*The USSR's proposal yesterday for a resumption this month or next of the Geneva conference on the Middle East culminates several weeks of Soviet diplomatic activity.*

Arab press sources also say that the USSR will surface an initiative in the next few days for the arrangement of a cease-fire in Lebanon.

The proposal at this time for a return to Geneva may have been prompted both by Secretary Kissinger's diplomatic shuttle in southern Africa and the sudden opening of the Syrian military offensive in Lebanon on Tuesday. A Soviet embassy officer in Cairo commented privately on Thursday that the Syrian move took Moscow by surprise.

The USSR's Geneva exercise has been a sterile one in the past, and there is no reason to believe the Soviets have any hope of greater success this time. Similarly, judging from recent statements by Syrian President Asad, any Soviet initiative on Lebanon will have trouble getting off the ground.

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Asad has never before spoken so openly of his differences with the USSR.

In the course of a press interview, he acknowledged that General Secretary Brezhnev had asked for a Syrian withdrawal in July but dismissed the request as nothing more than an "expression of a point of view." He implied that the Soviets were ignorant of the real factors in Lebanon, and indicated that Syrian forces would remain there until their job was done.

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EGYPT-LIBYA: [redacted]

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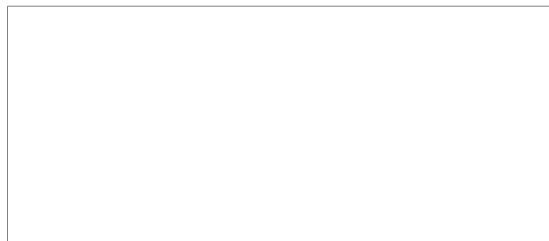
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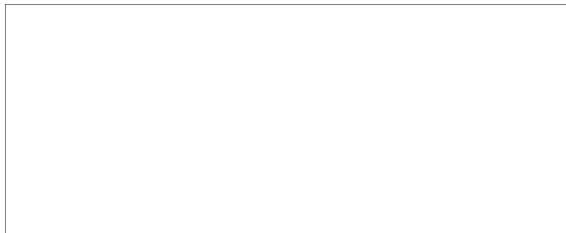
*The Egyptians apparently are conducting minor military provocations along the Libyan border and possibly some sabotage within Libya.*

These activities may be intended to test the Libyan reaction as well as the capabilities of Egyptian assets in Libya, in anticipation of a future larger scale operation. The Libyans are not rising to the bait, however. 25X1



*Both Egypt and Libya have recently received deliveries of military equipment--Egypt from China and Libya from the USSR.*

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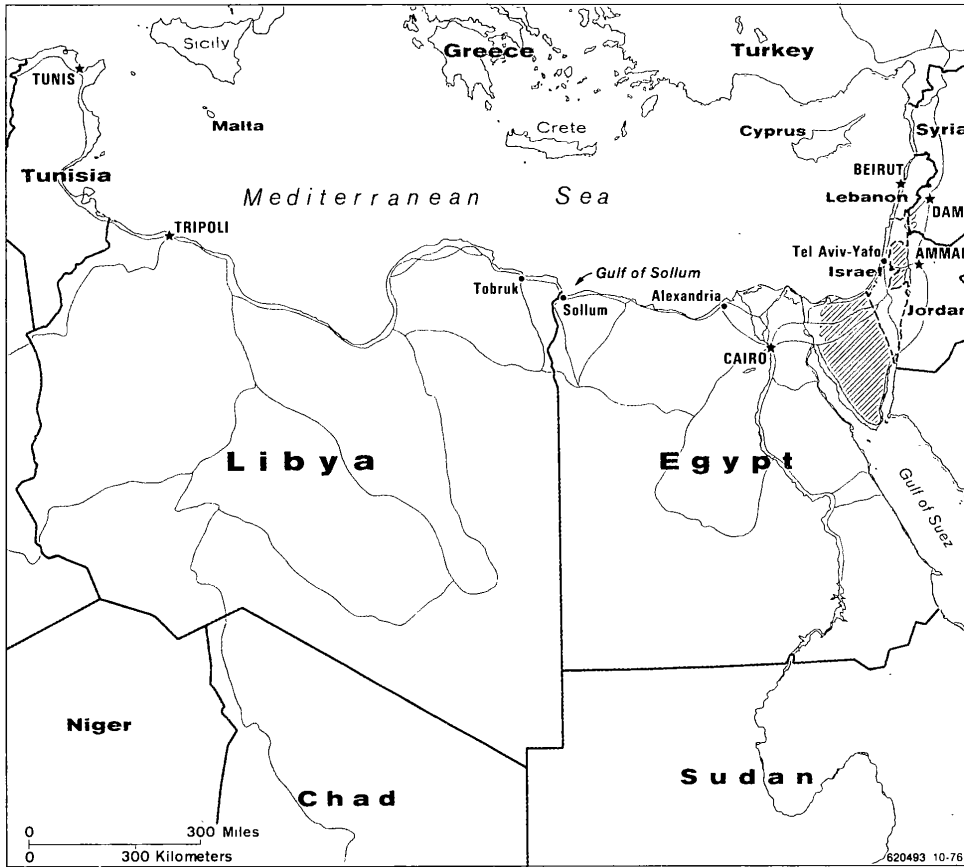


Under agreements reached in January and March, China will deliver 30 MIG-17 engines to Egypt this year and will provide aircraft and tank engines, naval missiles, and submarine battery systems in 1977. This equipment will be used for repair and maintenance of Egypt's aging Soviet equipment.

Libya received on Wednesday the first of at least six Osa II guided-missile patrol boats from the USSR. The missile boats are part of a \$730-million military aid agreement concluded in 1974. More than half of the equipment involved in that agreement has now

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been delivered. Earlier deliveries included over 50 MIG-23s, tanks, SAM and Scud missiles, and 6 TU-22 medium bombers.

USSR-EGYPT: *A Soviet naval tug has returned to the Gulf of Sollum anchorage, just outside Egyptian territorial waters near the Libyan border.*

The last previous Soviet ship in the anchorage had left on Sunday, presumably because Egyptian military exercises were being held in the area.

Several days later Egyptian naval ships fired on two Soviet mooring buoys in the gulf. The attacks apparently damaged but did not sink the buoys,

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The damage will be apparent to the Soviets but will not dissuade them from continuing to use the anchorage.

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ANGOLA: *The Angolan government is conducting a major military operation against National Union insurgents near the Namibian border.*

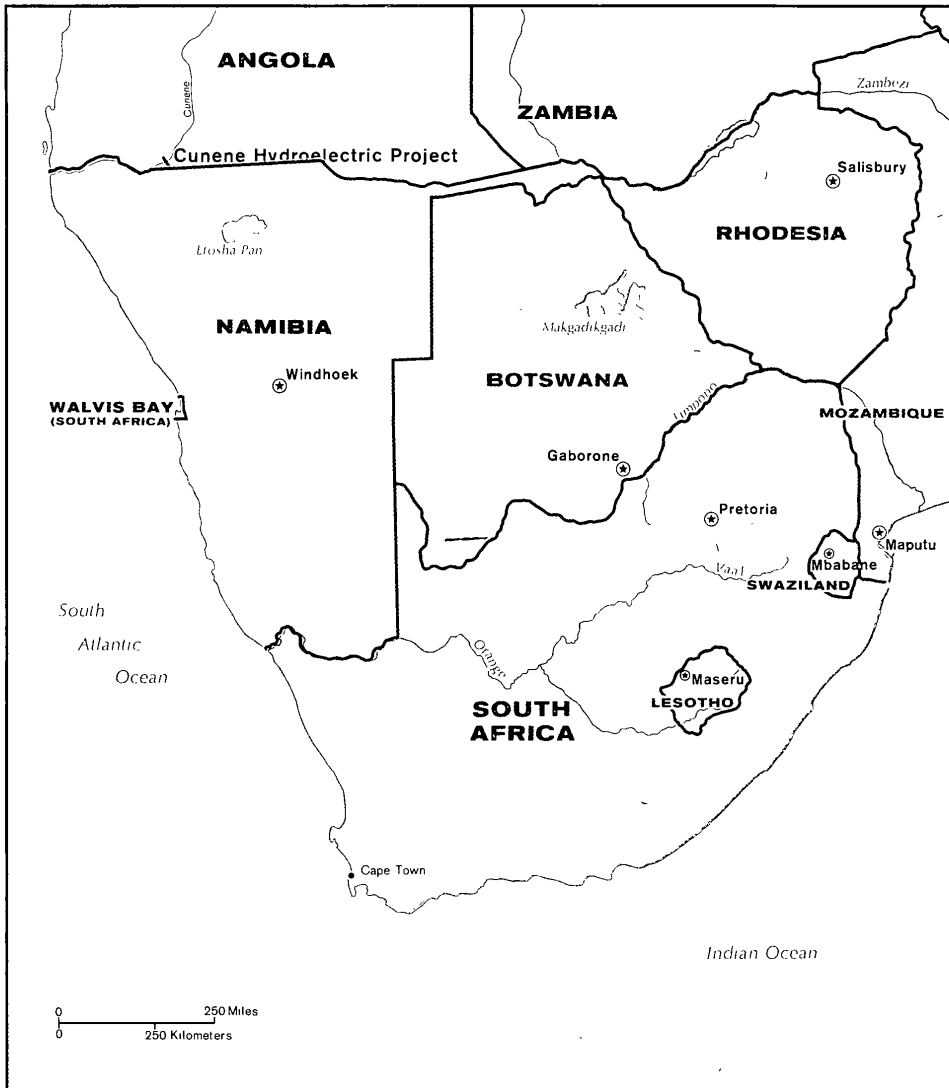
Government forces are being supported by Cubans and apparently also by guerrillas of the South West Africa People's Organization.

Both SWAPO and the National Union draw their basic support from the same tribal group, which inhabits southern Angola and northern Namibia.

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*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

South African forces have apparently been carrying on limited operations of their own in southern Angola with the assistance of local tribesmen. Angolan government forces captured a South African soldier and three Angolan associates in the border area in late August. At a press conference in Luanda, the South African acknowledged that the group was engaged in escorting antiregime Angolans to training camps in Namibia.

Pretoria confirmed earlier this week that it has suspended construction at two points on the joint Angolan - South African Cunene hydroelectric project. Work in one area was halted at the request of the Angolan government.

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NOTES

*President Giscard has failed to rally popular support for the French government's economic stabilization program.*

The Gaullist deputies have reluctantly agreed to support the austerity program, but elements of the center and right as well as the opposition are criticizing the program. The Socialist-Communist coalition, which adamantly opposes the plan, yesterday announced it would support a national strike that three major labor organizations have called for October 7.

President Giscard also faces a challenge from within his own coalition. Former prime minister Chirac has announced that he will lead a personal crusade against the left in the 1978 elections, a move that will undercut Giscard's efforts to attract a broadly based majority. It may also expose the plan presented by Prime Minister Barre to further sniping from the right.

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*The USSR reportedly signed a new arms agreement with Uganda on Tuesday, which may provide for the replacement of the MIG-21 fighters destroyed during the Israeli commando raid on Entebbe Airport in early July.*

No details are available, but Ugandan President Amin hailed the agreement as "effective and timely."

Amin has wanted to obtain replacement aircraft from the USSR, which provided Uganda's first MIG-21 fighters in 1974. Following one of several meetings between Amin and the Soviet charge in Kampala after the Entebbe episode, the Ugandan media reported that the re-equipment of the Ugandan Armed Forces had been discussed.

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