

The President's Daily Brief

October 14, 1976

2

Top Secret 25X1

Exempt from general
declassification schedule of E.O. 11652
exemption category 5B(1),(2),(3)
declassified only on approval of
the Director of Central Intelligence

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

October 14, 1976

Table of Contents

Lebanon: The Syrian offensive continues. Israel probably welcomes Syria's move both as a further blow to Palestinian-leftist prospects and as an aid to Israeli efforts to eliminate Palestinian commando units from southern Lebanon.
(Page 1)

China: Party cadre have been informed of the Politburo's "unanimous" recommendation that Hua Kuo-feng be promoted to posts formerly held by Mao Tse-tung, and formal action by the Central Committee plenum presumably has been taken.
(Page 3)

Thailand: Prime Minister Thanin has ruled out an early return to Western-style democracy. (Page 6)

Notes: Egypt-Libya; USSR (Page 8)

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY



620541 10-76

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

LEBANON: The Syrian advance south and west of Jazzin continued yesterday, while artillery barrages and ground movements in the mountains east of Beirut could indicate the development of another offensive there.

Syrian forces are proceeding slowly toward Sidon, using tanks under cover of an artillery barrage. The Syrians probably plan to cut the city off from its sources of supply rather than take it outright, a move that would prove costly.

The Syrian drive south of Jazzin toward Nabatiyah has apparently reached Saydun. Other Syrian forces have not yet reached Aramta, which is defended by a contingent of Iraqi-dominated fedayeen.

It is not clear how far south the Syrians are prepared to go. They are narrowing the gap between their positions and the Israeli border, and are presumably wary of triggering some kind of overt Israeli reaction.

Syria has announced that it will attend the Arab summit conference scheduled for October 18.

Its delegation will be headed by Foreign Minister Khaddam, not President Asad--a move presumably designed to undercut the summit's effectiveness without appearing obviously obstructive.

The Israeli government will monitor Syrian troop movements closely, but it probably welcomes the new offensive as a further blow to Palestinian-leftist prospects and as an aid to its own efforts to eliminate Palestinian commando units from southern Lebanon.

Israeli military authorities continue to provide tactical guidance and limited military aid to Christian forces near the Israeli-Lebanon border. The Israelis are likely to increase this assistance should Palestinian units put up stiff resistance to the Syrians.

--continued

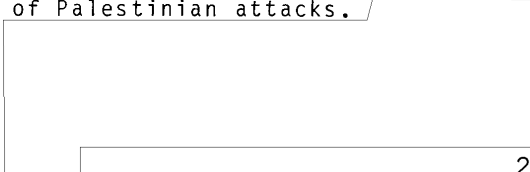
FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

Last weekend, Israeli artillery units located along the border reportedly shelled Palestinian strongholds around Marj Uyun in support of Christian attacks against these positions. Several weeks ago, the Israelis apparently provided similar support for Christian forces fighting Palestinian units in the southern Lebanese village of Ayn Ibil.

Israeli troops have for some time conducted patrols along principal Palestinian access routes along both sides of the border. Unconfirmed press reports state that night patrols are now sent as far north as the Litani River.

Israeli troops also continue to occupy observation posts established several months ago inside Lebanon and recently set up a new observation post just south of Marj Uyun that reportedly enables them to monitor Palestinian movements throughout much of southern Lebanon.

The border patrols and observation posts permit the Israelis to give southern Christian villages warning of Palestinian attacks.



25X1

Israeli naval patrols along the southern and central coast of Lebanon have increased since early October, probably to interdict foreign ships suspected of carrying munitions to Palestinian forces. Guided missile attack boats now regularly maintain close surveillance of foreign merchantmen off the Lebanese coast between the Israeli border and Beirut.

* * *

--continued

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

CHINA: Announcement of the elevation of Hua Kuo-feng to posts formerly held by Mao Tse-tung presumably will be made at the conclusion of the Central Committee plenum which now seems to be in session in Peking.

Party cadre were informed of the Politburo's "unanimous" recommendation of the promotions last Friday. Private confirmation of Hua's change in status, which was made to Western newsmen Tuesday evening by Chinese officials, presumably followed formal action by the plenum.

It is possible that no public statement will be made on the fate of the four discredited leftist leaders even after the meeting in Peking ends. Party leaders may wish the charges against them to circulate internally, preferring that the bill of particulars leak out only after some time has passed.

The confidence of the leadership, from Hua on down, and the undisguised glee and relief evidenced by many officials at lower levels suggest that the dominant group in Peking believes it has a convincing case against the leftist faction. These officials may also believe that the leaderless but still significant minority of leftist followers in the capital and the provinces will not react to the arrests with uncontrollable violence. The fate of the leftist leaders is probably no longer in doubt. Communist propaganda outlets in Hong Kong have removed from sale photographs in which these individuals appear.

So far as can be ascertained, the country is calm.

There is no evidence thus far of special troop alerts in Peking or in the provinces--including both the sensitive Manchurian area

--continued

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

which has been a hotbed of radical sentiment in the past year and Shanghai, the home of three of the four leftist leaders. Regular troops apparently have been used to occupy Tsinghua and Peking universities, centers of agitation that have been closely associated with leftist leaders Chiang Ching and Yao Wen-yuan.

In the absence of any official announcements, rumors continue to circulate in Peking regarding the number of persons arrested last week. The US Liaison Office reports that the account now receiving most credence places the number at over 50. In addition to high officials in the ministries of education and culture who were closely associated with Chiang Ching, there have been persistent reports that Politburo member Wang Tung-hsing has also been arrested.

This story is plausible although there is no direct confirmation. Most accounts of the past several days claim that Hua used his own personal bodyguard, rather than the normal Peking security force which has been under Wang's direction, to make the arrests. Wang has long been suspected of leftist sympathies although he is not as clearly identified with the leftist cause as Chiang Ching, Yao Wen-yuan, Chang Chun-chiao, and Wang Hung-wen.

If Wang has been arrested along with the four prominent leftists, there are presently only ten full members of the Politburo remaining out of 21 elected at the 10th Party Congress in 1973.

Of these ten, one is bedridden and wholly inactive, and another, the left-leaning commander of the Shenyang Military Region, may also be in trouble. There is thus ample reason for the Central Committee plenum to replenish this leading policy-making organ. With the

--continued

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

left-right political deadlock now broken, this should prove less troublesome than previously.

Although the outline of the dramatic events of the past week is relatively clear, many details remain in shadow.

It seems likely that the decision to name Hua party chairman could only have been made after the leftists were taken out of the picture. The leftists were almost certainly resisting not only Hua's promotion but also a decision to place in his hands operative control of the Maoist legacy--publication of the Chairman's selected and collected works.

The record of dissension evident in the public media during the month following Mao's death makes it virtually certain that the leading leftists were somehow intriguing either to retain the shreds of power they still possessed or to turn the tables on their "rightist" enemies with the help of Wang Tung-hsing's Peking security unit.

The current Peking rumors suggest that, in addition to "forging Mao's will," the leftists attempted to usurp control, forcing Hua Kuo-feng's hand. But it is equally possible that important military leaders, impatient with continued leftist intransigence and agitation, urged Hua to make a pre-emptive move.

It is clear that when Hua acted he had strong military support.

In particular, he was backed by Defense Minister Yeh Chien-ying, Su Yu--a leading member of the important military affairs commission--and Chen Hsi-lien, the commander of the Peking Military

--continued

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

Region. This military support strengthens Hua's hand during the immediate crisis but also makes him more dependent on the military over the longer term.

* * *

THAILAND: *Prime Minister Thanin has ruled out an early return to Western-style democracy.*

In a speech to the nation yesterday, Thanin outlined a prolonged period of political reform that would gradually restore democratic processes in three stages over a 12-year period.

--The first four-year stage would be a period of "national reconstruction" in which an appointed unicameral legislature would ensure political stability.

--During the second four years, the legislature would be broadened into two houses with equal powers--the upper house appointed and the lower house elected.

--The third stage would see the "development of the democratic system."

It seems clear that the appointed legislature--which the military leaders hope to have in place by the end of the month--will be little more than a rubber stamp for the decisions of a strong executive. But it is not clear how much latitude the civilian cabinet will be permitted.



25X1

--continued

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

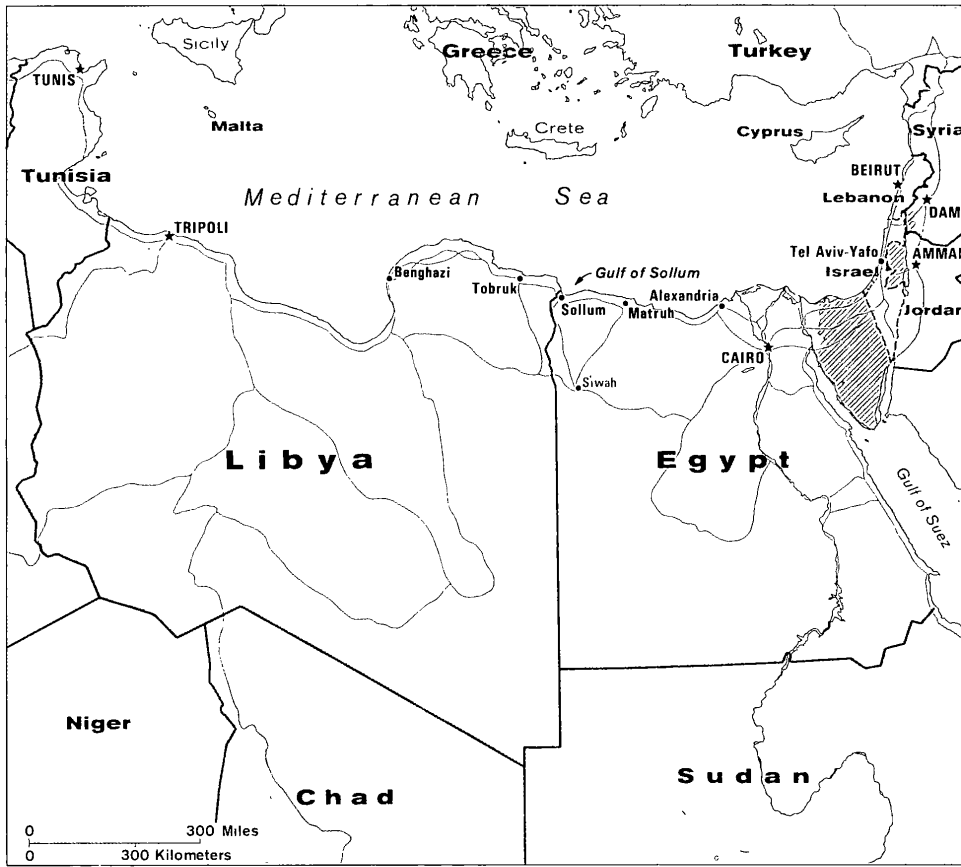
25X1



25X1

* * *

--continued

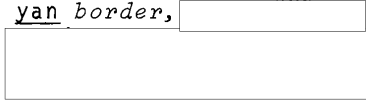


820542 10-78

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

NOTES

Egypt is preparing to conduct a large para-troop exercise in the western part of the country near the Libyan border, [redacted]



At least 22 helicopters were to fly to the Matruh area yesterday, which would be the largest helicopter movement ever noted in the western border area.

25X1

We have no indications of any new Egyptian troop movements toward the Libyan border or of any forces going on alert. The Egyptians do not appear to have the necessary ground forces in position to launch a major military operation into Libya, but the movement of large numbers of helicopters to the area would give Cairo the capability to launch sizable commando raids at any time.

Operations staged from Matruh would probably be limited to the immediate Libyan border area. Targets as far west as Tobruk would be within range of the Egyptian helicopters provided they could be refueled at a forward area such as Sollum.

* * *

The Soviets are preparing to send a second crew to the Salyut 5 space station, probably today.

Launch preparations and the positioning of space support ships appear to be complete.

Salyut 5, a military intelligence collector, has been in orbit since June 22, but has been manned for only part of that time. Current preparations suggest that the Soviets have devised corrective procedures for dealing with the atmospheric contaminant in the cabin that required curtailment of the 48-day mission in July and August.

Assuming that the cosmonauts can correct the contamination problem, they probably will remain aboard Salyut 5 from four to eight weeks.

Top Secret