

The President's Daily Brief

October 26, 1976



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Exempt from general
declassification schedule of E.O. 11652
exemption category SB(1),(2),(3)
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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

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USSR: *The Soviet decision to make public General Secretary Brezhnev's major foreign and domestic policy review--delivered yesterday to the opening session of a plenary meeting of the party Central Committee--probably reflects the importance the leadership attaches to getting its position on record in advance of the US elections.*

The move may also be designed to emphasize that any personnel changes that may be announced at the close of the plenum will not affect basic policy lines. The wide dissemination of the speech breaks the precedent of some years of generally unpublicized plenary proceedings.

Brezhnev's review of foreign policy was a reiteration of standing Soviet positions. Acknowledging a "slowdown" in US-Soviet relations, Brezhnev disclaimed Soviet responsibility and ascribed it instead to the "complex political situation," especially the election, in the United States. Brezhnev cited the same reason for the fact that the United States "has not yet answered" Soviet strategic arms limitation proposals of last March.

In some of the most specific comment in some time on relations with the US, Brezhnev emphasized that "on the whole," US-Soviet relations "retain, so far... positive direction."

He went on to say that "whoever comes to power in Washington after the elections...one thing must be absolutely clear: our policy of extensively developing relations with the United States, of lessening the danger of a new world war, remains invariable."

Addressing Peking directly for the first time since Mao's death, Brezhnev offered to improve relations.

He reiterated that the USSR is ready to normalize relations in line with the principles of peaceful coexistence and hinted that Moscow may be ready to restore party-to-party ties. Brezhnev concluded by stating that where mutual relations go from here depends on "what stand will be taken by the other side."

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Remarks on the Middle East were a repetition of previous expressions of hope for a peaceful solution but seemed to reflect little expectation that Moscow would play a more active role.

Brezhnev called for a reconciliation of Lebanese leftist, Palestinian, and Syrian forces while regretting Damascus' military involvement. He called again for the reconvening of the Geneva conference but conveyed no real sense of urgency.

On Africa, Brezhnev mentioned neither Western diplomatic initiatives nor the USSR's support for forces of "national liberation."

He hailed the development of Soviet relations with Angola, Mozambique, and "other fighters for freedom" and condemned Rhodesia and South Africa as "imperialist stooges" and "bastions of racism."

In dealing with the domestic front, Brezhnev's broad and detailed economic report set the stage for the Supreme Soviet session scheduled to open tomorrow.

In the first public estimate of Soviet agricultural yields by a Soviet leader, Brezhnev said the harvest so far has amounted to 216 million tons, but that the total yield is not yet in.

The main task of the short session of the Soviet parliament will be approval of the 1976-80 five-year plan and of next year's budget.

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LEBANON: *Israeli-supported Christian advances in the south could threaten the cease-fire elsewhere in Lebanon, but most Arab leaders so far seem reluctant to let this situation interfere either with the truce or with the ratification of peacekeeping arrangements being discussed at the current Arab summit.*

Christian forces now appear to control all but a few towns along the Lebanon-Israel border.

According to Israeli radio reports, Christian forces yesterday recaptured the town of Al-Ayshiyah, which had been lost to Palestinian and leftist forces last week. Farther south, the Christians have surrounded both Mays al Jabal and Bint Jubayl, reportedly the only remaining pockets of Palestinian-leftist control along the border.

Arab leaders recognize that the Christian-Israeli strategy is designed to create a buffer zone along the border before the Cairo accords--which allow the Palestinians virtually free run of some border areas--can be fully implemented.

The situation in the south was added to the summit agenda yesterday, and the foreign ministers met last night to formulate recommendations for consideration at the second session of the summit today.

Most of those leaders who dominate the conference may be unwilling to endanger the Lebanese cease-fire and the tenuous harmony achieved at the smaller Riyadh summit last week by encouraging the Palestinians and leftists to counter the Christian advances.



Palestine Liberation Organization chief Yasir Arafat may try to turn the Palestinians' reverses in the south to their advantage.

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[redacted] for the present the Palestinians are willing to go along with the situation in the south because they see the Syrian presence in Lebanon as a guarantee over the longer term against an effective Christian-Israeli alliance. Not only do the Palestinians expect low-level friction to increase between the Christians and Syrians, but they are also banking on Syria's commitment to the struggle against Israel to prevent Damascus from permitting Christian-Israeli hegemony for long over southern Lebanon.

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The summit seems to be handling smoothly the composition of the expanded Arab League security force for Lebanon.

Apparently only Iraq has seriously objected to the inclusion of the 25,000 Syrian troops already in Lebanon in the 30,000-man force.

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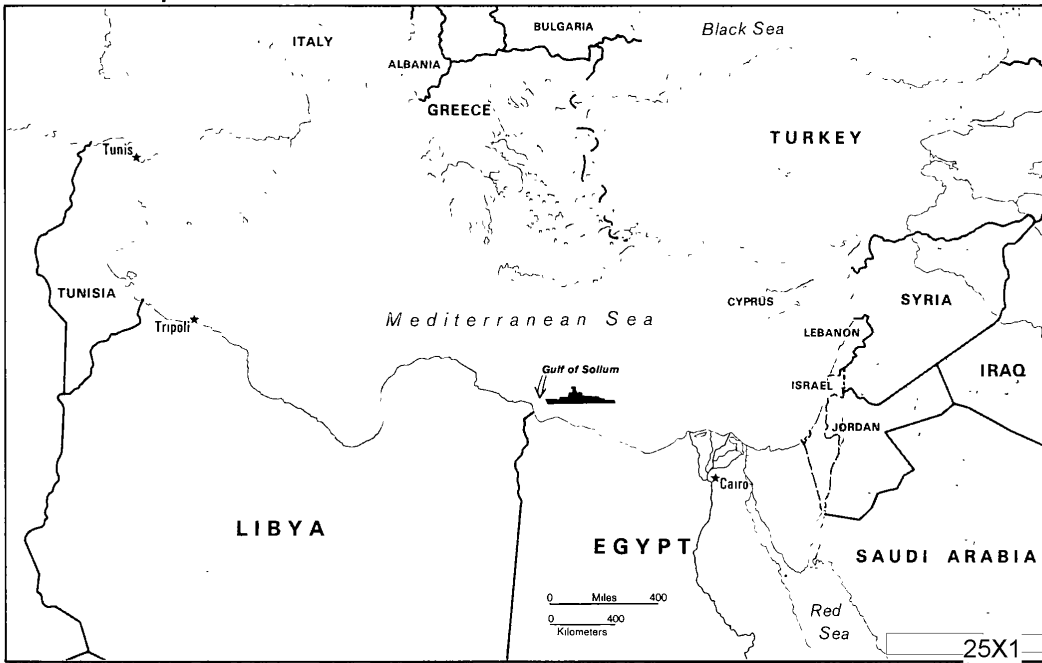
Libya reversed an earlier decision and sent a representative to the conference.

In a surprise move, Libya sent to the summit Foreign Minister al-Huni, who has lived in self-imposed exile in Cairo for over a year. Al-Huni, who has never been a proponent of some of the radical policies President Qadhafi pursues, may quietly go along with the majority.

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Soviet Ships in the Gulf of Sollum



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NOTES

The USSR resumed more active operations in the Gulf of Sollum yesterday--the day after Egyptian naval maneuvers in the area concluded.

Two Soviet ships--the helicopter cruiser Leningrad and a Kashin-class destroyer--arrived in the Gulf of Sollum yesterday. Flight operations from the Leningrad were either in progress or about to begin;

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Two months ago, Egypt declared an area in the northern Gulf of Sollum closed for naval maneuvers for designated periods between August 25 and October 24. The Soviets largely ignored the closure notices and, during most of this time, maintained a reduced presence in the northern part of the gulf.

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Thailand's new military-dominated government hopes to obtain substantially increased military and economic aid from the US.

The military council--which will continue to shape Thai foreign policy despite the establishment of a civilian administration--wants to restore at least partially the former relationship with Washington and plans to press hard for increased assistance. Council leaders particularly hope to get the US ammunition stockpile in Thailand on liberal terms.

The council apparently assumes that the US Congress would not approve the resumption of a substantial US military presence in Thailand.

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