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The President's Daily Brief

December 18, 1976

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

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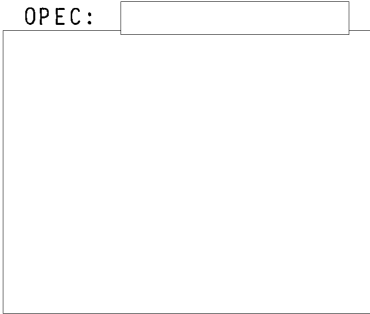
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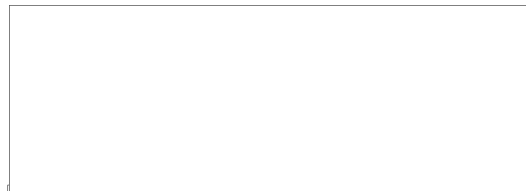
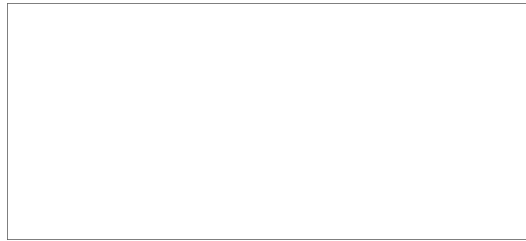
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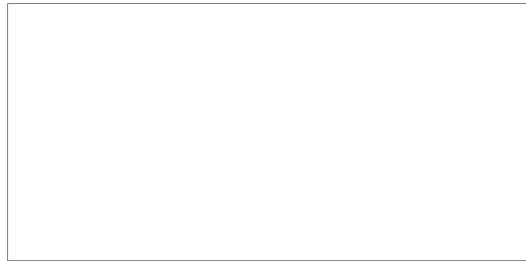


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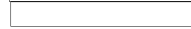
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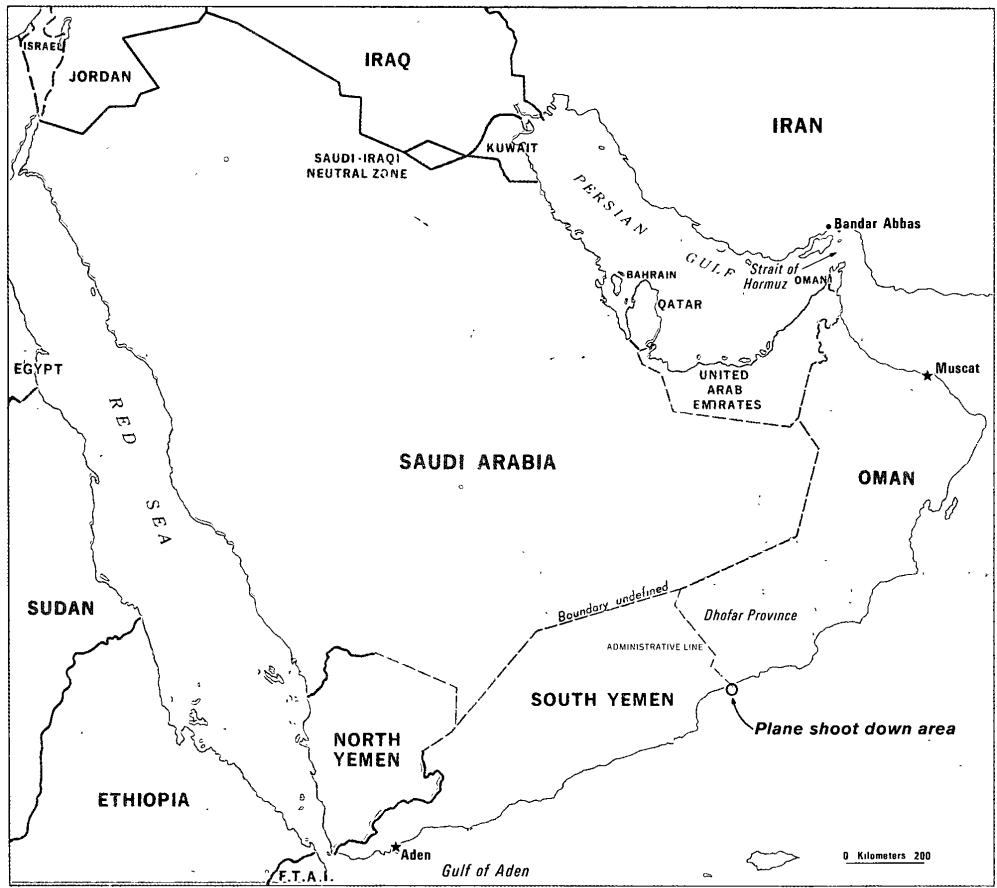


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IRAN - SOUTH YEMEN:

Saudi diplomatic efforts to arrange the release of the Iranian F-4 pilot shot down and captured by South Yemen last month have apparently stalled, possibly as a result of the Shah's stiffening demands.

The pilot was originally to have been flown from Aden in a Saudi plane earlier this week, but he has not yet been released.

South Yemeni officials have apparently agreed to hand over the pilot on December 20 but his return could be delayed again if the method of recovering the wreckage of the downed plane is not satisfactorily settled. The Shah is now insisting that a team of Iranian officers be present when the aircraft is raised, and that the presence of Saudi observers would be insufficient.

If there is opposition to the Iranian involvement, the Shah is apparently prepared to destroy the wreckage rather than allow Aden to raise it alone.

Iran has dispatched a destroyer and a fleet auxiliary to the general area of the downed plane, which is lying about a quarter mile offshore near the South Yemen - Oman border. They are presumably prepared to interdict any unilateral South Yemeni efforts at recovery.

The Saudis have agreed to sound out the South Yemenis on Iranian participation in the recovery operation, although the Saudis apparently believe that a Saudi presence ought to be sufficient. The Iranians have given no indication of willingness to budge on the issue.

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USSR: *The USSR this week launched two large spacecraft using a single launch vehicle in what apparently was the first test in a new program.*

This test may be related to the USSR's manned space effort, possibly research and development of a ferry vehicle. The two spacecraft, launched from the Tyuratam missile test range, were deorbited after completing a single revolution of the earth. 25X1 25X1



Several pieces of information lead us to believe these spacecraft are related to the Soviet manned space program: 25X1



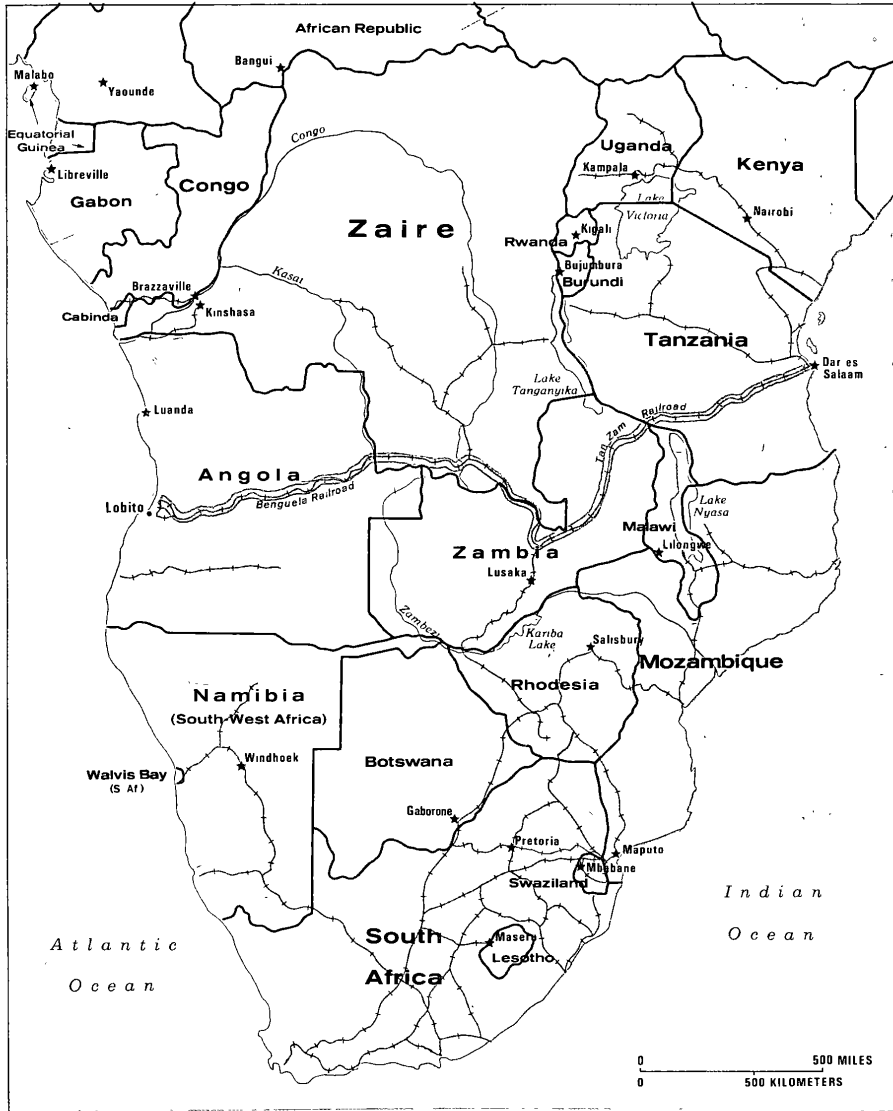
and the spacecraft landed in the recovery area for manned spacecraft.

We believe that the spacecraft remained intact during re-entry, suggesting that they could be related to a new Soviet ferry vehicle program and could have been used to test a new type of re-entry method. Other vehicles intended to re-enter the atmosphere safely separate into several pieces prior to re-entry, and only a portion lands intact.

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ZAIRE-ZAMBIA: *President Kaunda of Zambia and President Mobutu of Zaire are meeting to discuss ways to expedite the reopening of the Benguela railroad which runs through Angola.*

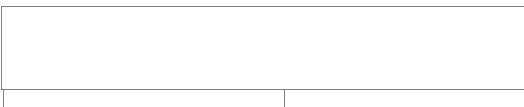
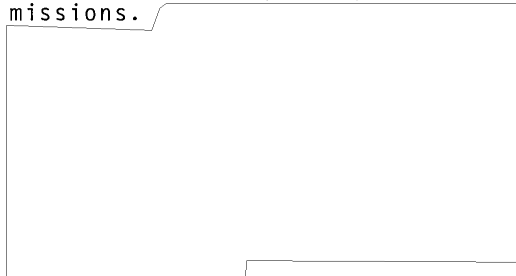
In the mid-1970s, Zambia shipped half of its exports, including most of its copper, on this railroad. The closure of the route in 1975 because of the insurgency in Angola forced Zambia to divert its shipments to the Tanzam railroad and other routes. Although the Tanzam can carry most of Zambia's exports now, Kaunda would like to have the option of using the Benguela route.

Zaire too is interested in the reopening of the Benguela route because the Rhodesian railroad it normally uses has come under frequent attack by Rhodesian guerrillas.

Relations between Zambia and Angola will have to be improved and the National Union forces--who oppose the Neto regime in Angola and are based in Zambia--will have to be restrained before Zambia will be able to use the railroad through Angola.

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Kaunda has recognized the Neto government, and the two countries are taking steps to open diplomatic missions.



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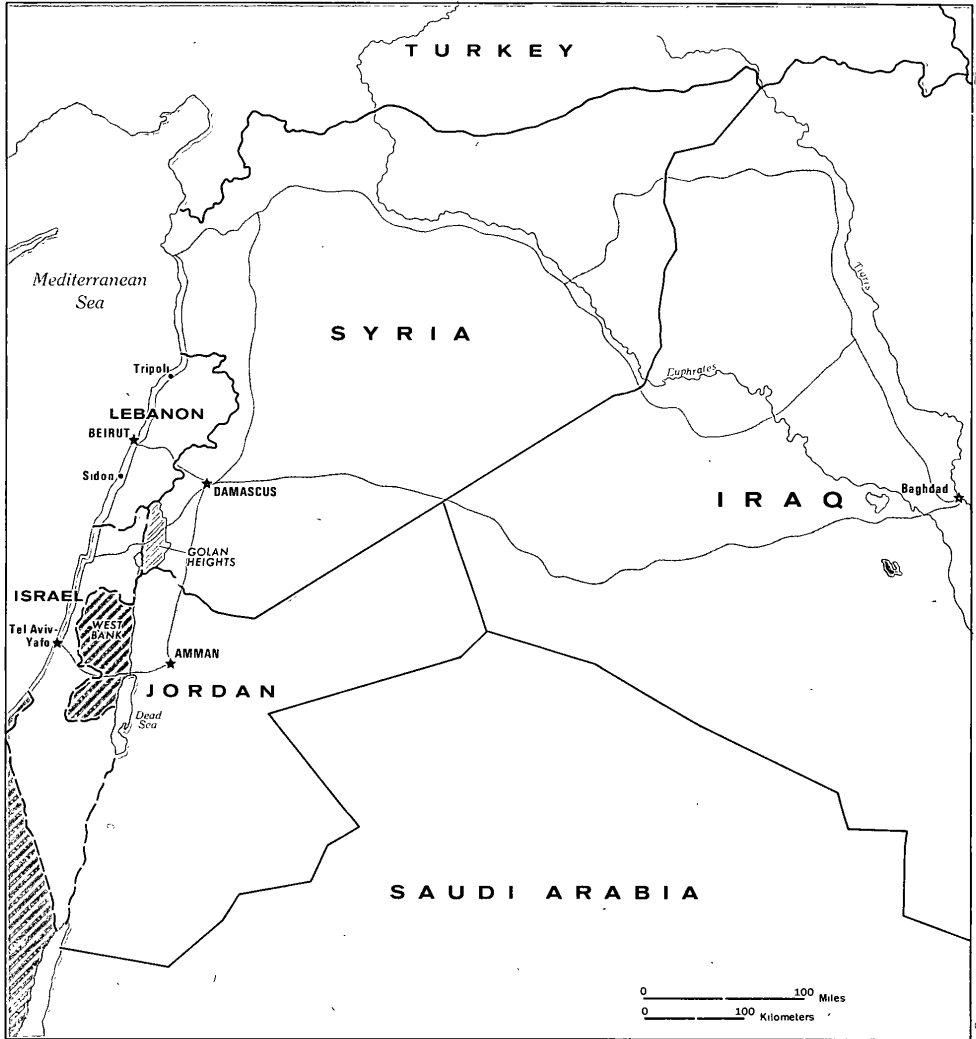
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Zaire also wants to improve relations with Angola and has cut off nearly all of its support of Angolan groups still fighting the Neto government.

Wider Southern African issues may also be discussed by Kaunda and Mobutu, especially the Rhodesian situation, in light of the lack of progress at the Geneva talks. Kaunda may see Mobutu as another moderate voice to temper the more radical views of presidents Neto and Machel.

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NOTE

We have new photography on Syrian troop dispositions and of a new airfield in the Christian sector of Lebanon.

U-2 photography [redacted] confirms the return of Syrian units-- sent to the Iraqi border last summer--to their normal positions along the Golan Heights. Syria withdrew the division-size force last month in apparent reciprocation for Iraqi withdrawals. 25X1

In Lebanon, satellite photography of mid-November shows a new airfield in the early stages of construction in a Christian-controlled area southwest of Tripoli. The Christians are probably planning to use the airstrip as an alternative point of entry for arms should they lose access to port facilities. Leftist and Palestinian forces began construction of airfields in southern Lebanon for similar purposes last summer.

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A NEW MILESTONE IN THE BREZHNEV CULT:
HIS FORTHCOMING 70TH BIRTHDAY

Leonid Brezhnev will celebrate his 70th birthday tomorrow, and the regime's handling of this event may shed a new light on his relationship with his colleagues and his attitude toward the succession.

Neither the Party Congress in February nor the Central Committee plenum in October took significant steps toward resolving the impasse over whether and how to provide a successor to Brezhnev. Instead, there has been evidence suggesting that Brezhnev has improved his position to some extent since the Congress and that he intends to try to remain in office indefinitely.

This apparent enhancement of Brezhnev's position has been accompanied by a growing "cult of personality," although his colleagues differ markedly in their willingness to employ the most eulogistic formulations. The 70th birthday celebration will provide an indication of whether we are about to see a new stage in the development of the cult, and it may help to resolve some of the uncertainty about the present limits of his power.

Until this year, a cautious and gradual approach had been used in developing the new Brezhnev cult, but it has more recently taken a sizeable step forward.

In October this year, Andrey Kirilenko, in a widely noted speech on the occasion of his own 70th birthday, went so far as to refer to "the Central Committee headed by Brezhnev," a formulation widely used for Khrushchev, but until now rarely for Brezhnev. Over the past few years, the tendency to bestow awards and honors upon Brezhnev has also gradually accelerated.

Praise for Brezhnev linked to the upcoming birthday celebration has already considerably surpassed attention lavished upon Khrushchev on a similar occasion in April 1964.

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Growth of the Brezhnev cult has been accompanied by statements intended to convey an impression that his authority has similarly been enhanced.

Brezhnev's authority, especially in the making of high-level personnel appointments, nevertheless still appears to be conditional and dependent on the agreement of his colleagues. Moreover, while the limits of his power clearly are broader than they were a year ago, Brezhnev's efforts to extend them further appear to be meeting resistance.

Controversy behind the scenes has probably accompanied preparations for celebrating Brezhnev's 70th birthday. His success in overcoming opposition to the most eulogistic rites will provide a measure of the extent of his present power.

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