

# The President's Daily Brief



*January 8, 1977*

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*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY*

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USSR-US: *The Soviet media are describing the controversy in the US over intelligence estimates of Soviet strategic objectives as part of a campaign to "tie Carter's hands in foreign policy."*

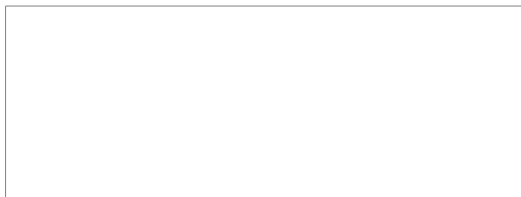
The press attacks are specifically directed at your administration-- a rare target of the Soviet media-- and they are unusually intemperate. You are accused of using your last days in office to damage detente, to increase military expenditures, and to deploy new strategic weapons systems.

One Tass article by veteran Soviet observer Valentin Zorin charges that you are attempting to "interfere openly in the affairs" of your successor. Soviet officials have privately implied that the Zorin commentary can be considered semi-official.

President-elect Carter continues to receive delicate handling from Soviet sources. Soviet news media repeatedly refer to his campaign commitments to detente and to continued cooperation with the USSR.

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USSR-EGYPT-SYRIA: *The USSR is clearly concerned about the rapprochement between Egypt and Syria.*



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The Soviets also interpret Saudi Arabia's growing influence in both Egypt and Syria as a setback to their interests throughout the Middle East. A Soviet diplomat in Cairo has privately accused the Saudis of acting as US proxies in the area, and has described the linkage between Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia as an indirect US effort to reduce Soviet influence in the Arab states.

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The major Soviet concern is that Syria, which has shared Moscow's opposition to the US-negotiated Sinai II accord, is falling in line with Egypt's view that the US holds the key to a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East. The delicacy of current Soviet-Syrian relations, however, precludes any heavy-handed direct Soviet criticism of the Syrians.

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### ERITREA: Insurgency



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NOTES

*Insurgent activity in Eritrea is forcing the Ethiopian government to consider abandoning some outposts and consolidating its forces in order to maintain control of major cities and highways in the province.*

One government battalion has been under siege since mid-September and probably will not be able to hold out much longer. Its loss would be a major victory for the insurgents and would add to government morale problems, which have become serious in the face of continued rebel pressure.

The insurgents have been enlarging and improving their forces over the past two years. Although the government's military position is weakening, it has shown no greater willingness to consider a political settlement acceptable to the insurgents.

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*South Korean President Pak reportedly plans a public statement next week in which he will link, for the first time, Seoul's long-standing proposal for a North-South nonaggression pact and the issue of US troop withdrawals.*

Seoul's foreign minister told Ambassador Sneider that Pak plans to say that if North Korea will agree to the pact, South Korea will not oppose US troop reductions. He added that the South Koreans expect Pyongyang to reject the pact proposal as it has done in the past.

The foreign minister claimed that Pak's aim is to give South Korea an image of greater independence and flexibility. A more important objective, however, may be to press the US to join Seoul in asking for a quid pro quo from North Korea such as a nonaggression pact. Seoul may also believe that North Korea's almost certain rejection could become an argument for slowing down any US disengagement.

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