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ISRAEL-EGYPT-SYRIA: Both the Israelis and the Arabs are becoming increasingly concerned about the military activities of the other, although neither side appears to be bent on initiating hostilities.

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At least four more IL-18s and two AN-22s, the Soviets' heaviest military transport, flew to Damascus yesterday. The flight of the AN-22s indicates that they are carrying equipment either into or out of Syria. In addition, a Soviet jet transport normally used to carry VIPs flew two round-trip missions over the last two days between Cairo and the USSR. (Another Soviet IL-18 arrived in Cairo yesterday, and the airlift between Egypt and the USSR is continuing today.)

Most of these flights probably are being used to evacuate Soviet dependents from Egypt and Syria.

[redacted] the Soviets began evacuating dependents of civilian technicians from Egypt on 3 October, and by 5 October about 1,000 had left. [redacted] two reasons for the evacuation: fear of an outbreak of hostilities or a further deterioration of Soviet-Egyptian relations. [redacted] the Soviets might be using the excuse of rising tensions to reduce their presence without further annoying the Egyptians. [redacted]

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In any case, Soviet attention to the Middle East has risen sharply in the last few days. [Redacted]

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Exercise and alert activities in Egypt are continuing, but elements of the air force and navy appear to be conducting normal training activity. [Redacted] a build-up of tanks and artillery along the Suez Canal, this cannot be confirmed. The Egyptians usually conduct such exercises in the fall and spring, but the current exercise is more realistic in that it includes the movement of troops and the mobilization of more reservists.

Syrian air activity appears to be normal, but there have been a number of reports, [Redacted] that Damascus is redeploying some of its ground forces in the Golan Heights area.

The Israeli attitude toward these developments has changed considerably since 1 October, when they viewed the activity in Egypt as normal and that in Syria as defensive in nature. During the past few days, the Israelis have conducted air reconnaissance of both the Suez Canal and Golan Heights areas. [Redacted]

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For Egypt, a military initiative makes little sense at this critical juncture of President Sadat's reorientation of domestic and foreign policies. Another round of hostilities would almost certainly destroy Sadat's painstaking efforts to invigorate the economy and would run counter to his current efforts to build a united Arab political front, particularly among the less militant, oil-rich states.

For the normally cautious Syrian President, a military adventure now would be suicidal, and he has said so. Far from seeking revenge for the loss of their MIG-21s to the Israeli Air Force, the Syrians appear to be bracing for a possible second blow from Israel.

Syrian fears, now being reflected in Damascus radiobroadcasts, could lead to a mobilization of their defenses, which in turn could alarm and galvanize the Israelis. Such a cycle of actions and reactions increases the risk of military clashes which neither side originally intended.

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