

DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Central Intelligence Bulletin

Secret

State Dept. review completed

No 041
19 July 1971

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Approved For Release 2003/08/08 : CIA-RDP79T00975A019500100001-4

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No. 0171/71
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CONTENTS

JORDAN: The latest offensive against the fedayeen
is all but over. (Page 1)

LAOS: The Communists are beginning to counter Vang
Pao's forces. (Page 2)

ICELAND: Defense issue (Page 3)

LAW OF THE SEA: Further conference preparations
(Page 3)

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JORDAN: The latest offensive against the fed-ayeen is all but over, although mopping-up operations are still going on.

Serious fighting between the two sides ceased on the morning of 16 July. Some groups of fedayeen have surrendered; the rest are pinned down on the western slopes of the mountains overlooking the Jordan River valley. A number are trying to make their way north to the Syrian border. Others--presumably aware that their chances of making it to Syria were slim--have fled across the river into Israeli-occupied territory and are surrendering to the Israeli authorities. An Israeli military spokesman announced yesterday that a total of 48 were picked up over the weekend.

The Syrian military delegation that arrived in Jordan to investigate the situation on 15 July visited several areas where fighting had taken place but was then over. The delegation--which seems to have been largely sympathetic to the government--has since confined its activities to helping set up assembly points for wounded and captured fedayeen.

[Radio Baghdad announced yesterday that the Iraqi Government has asked the Jordanian Government to recall its ambassador from Baghdad, and that it is closing its border with Jordan.] Other Arab reaction has been minimal. Representatives of Egypt, Libya, Syria, and the Sudan meeting in Mersa Matruh routinely expressed concern over the fighting and urged Jordan to cooperate with the Syrian delegation. A two-man Egyptian-Saudi team is flying to Damascus within a few days to discuss the issue, and President Bourguiba of Tunisia has decided to send an official delegation to Amman. By and large, however, Jordan seems to have gotten off rather lightly; the most serious consequences are likely to be a delay in the renewal of Kuwait's subsidy payments to Jordan, and a chill in Jordan's improving relations with Egypt.

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Central Intelligence Bulletin

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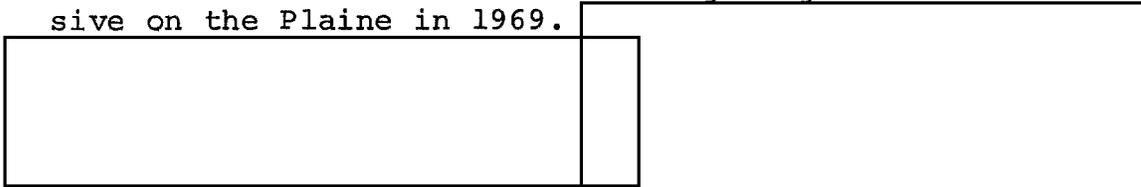
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LAOS: The Communists are beginning to counter Vang Pao's forces near the Plaine des Jarres.

A North Vietnamese company overran five advanced irregular positions on the eastern edge of the Plaine on 17 July. The attack was supported by two tanks that have been active in this area for several days. Other Communist harassments were reported along the eastern periphery of the Plaine over the weekend, but no positions changed hands.

The irregulars, meanwhile, have turned their attention to the area north of the Plaine. One battalion has pushed into the foothills north of Route 7, while another continues to move south from the Bouam Long base. Vang Pao may hope that if these forces link up, he will force the Communists to abandon Muong Soui town and other isolated positions west of the Plaine.

North Vietnam's authoritative party and army newspapers asserted on 15 July that Vang Pao's actions had created a "grave" situation in north Laos and threatened that they would be met by "appropriate" countermeasures. The papers still referred to Communist proposals for a Laos peace settlement, however, and the tone and substance of their statements were similar to those issued during Vang Pao's offensive on the Plaine in 1969.



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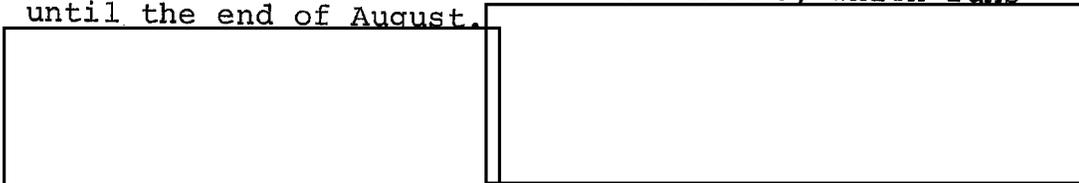
ICELAND: The new governing center-left coalition apparently does not attach any immediacy to its call for a phased withdrawal of the US-manned Icelandic Defense Force. Pro-US Foreign Minister Agustsson told the press on 16 July that further announcements on defense matters should not be expected in the near future; rather, extending Iceland's fishing limits will "occupy most of our time." It remains a question, however, to what extent Agustsson has agreement on this line from all elements in his own Progressive Party and from its coalition partners, the Liberal Left and the Communist-dominated Labor Alliance. Differences on the defense issue reinforce the view that the coalition's life will be stormy and perhaps limited.



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LAW OF THE SEA: The UN Seabeds Committee convenes today in Geneva to prepare further for the Law of the Sea Conference in 1973. Hoping to counter possible delaying tactics by the Latin Americans, several other delegations--including the US and the Soviet Union--favor early submission to the committee of a list of issues on which treaty articles would be drafted by the conference. If this and other procedural matters are resolved, the committee will be able to move on to such contentious substantive issues as coastal state preferences over fishing rights and the establishment of an international seabeds regime and the limits of its authority. The US hopes that progress on these matters will be made at this session of the Seabeds Committee, which runs until the end of August.



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