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SOUTH VIETNAM: The Communists reportedly believe a cease-fire may be declared late this month and are preparing to launch a last-minute round of attacks in some areas.

[redacted] COSVN now says there "will be a cease-fire" between 25 December and 1 January. All available forces in the area have been ordered to carry out widespread attacks to obtain control of as much of the countryside as possible in Military Region 3, north and west of the capital. [redacted]

[redacted] enemy forces are to carry out attacks in Tay Ninh Province prior to 25 December.

In Quang Ngai Province, prisoner reports confirm that regiments of a North Vietnamese division are preparing for renewed attacks in the coastal area. Such attacks could involve all three of the infantry divisions spread throughout this coastal region.

Enemy ground and artillery action against South Vietnamese Marines increased yesterday in northernmost Quang Tri Province. According to US advisers, the enemy appeared to be testing the South Vietnamese defenses. Moreover, the Communists employed proportionally more artillery fire against government forces both north and west of Quang Tri City than has been noted for several weeks. Thus far, the Communists have been concerned primarily with the defense of the areas taken earlier in the year.

[redacted]

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SOMALIA: President Siad may have been forced out of office by his colleagues on the ruling council.

The local Somali press, which dutifully follows the government line and gives Siad prominent coverage, has been downgrading the President during the past few days in favor of Vice-President Samantar and Minister of Sports and Labor Rabileh. Rabileh reportedly clashed with Siad recently [redacted] Samantar probably had been stripped of much power recently by Siad.

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Both Samantar and Rabileh as well as National Security Service Director Suleiman probably would figure prominently in any successor administration. The three were pictured together on the front page of the 8 December edition of a leading Somali newspaper when Samantar returned from a month-long tour of the northern part of the country. [redacted]

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ROMANIA - WARSAW PACT: Bucharest's strenuous efforts at Helsinki to establish itself as an equal and independent participant in preparations for a Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe have provoked sharp criticism from its allies.

Romania's activity challenges Moscow's prerogative to speak on behalf of the East Europeans. Soviet diplomats in Bucharest have voiced strong criticism of the Romanian performance in Helsinki. Soviet media coverage of party chief Brezhnev's visit to Hungary last week is continuing to emphasize his references to the need for strengthening socialist unity. [REDACTED]

Budapest reports [REDACTED] have severely criticized his government and have nearly ostracized the Romanian Embassy. This censure is tied directly to Romania's airing in an international forum a position independent of other Pact members.

Poland is reportedly concerned that Romanian activity in Helsinki will provoke Moscow to tighten Pact discipline. The Poles are irritated because they consider Bucharest's action to be an unnecessary breaking of ranks that raises issues which could have a divisive effect on bloc unity. Polish party leader Gierak, who has considerably improved relations with Romania in his two years in power, this week suddenly canceled a trip to Romania that he had scheduled for Sunday.

Despite these reactions, the Romanians appear determined to continue pressing for assurances that the rights of small states will be preserved as Europe moves toward detente. [REDACTED]

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USSR-MBFR: Recent Soviet comment on MBFR suggests Moscow will accept the West's invitation to begin exploratory talks on 31 January, although the USSR apparently still has some problems working out the question of participation with its allies.

The most notable comment was party chief Brezhnev's remark in Hungary last week that he was convinced that a "constructive solution" would be found to the problem of force reductions. Soviet Ambassador Falin made a similarly affirmative statement during a West German radio interview on 30 November, and a Soviet diplomat in London recently volunteered that Moscow was in "dead earnest" about negotiating MBFR.

According to a Soviet diplomat in Bonn, Moscow probably will delay its formal response to the West until after a Warsaw Pact meeting later this month.

[redacted] such a meeting would take place in Moscow about 21 December, which would coincide with celebrations of the USSR's 50th anniversary. Less formal Pact consultations are already under way, as Brezhnev acknowledged during a speech in Hungary.

The main issue in Warsaw Pact discussions is likely to be the question of participation. [redacted]

[redacted] The Romanians seem likely to be disappointed; a Polish official in Washington, speaking on the basis of a communication from his government, agreed to accept Western flank states as "temporary" participants. He specified that the Eastern side would be represented by Poland, the USSR, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Hungary but would have no "temporary" participants. The Soviets remain reluctant--as does the US--to discuss substantive issues at the preliminary talks. [redacted]

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INDIA-PAKISTAN: Agreement on delineation of the line of control in Kashmir will clear the way for mutual troop withdrawals and possibly some progress in resolving other South Asian issues.

Terms of the agreement reached on 7 December have not been made public, but a statement by the Indian foreign minister indicates that New Delhi has agreed to compensate Pakistan for abandoning its claim to a one and one-half square mile enclave with equivalent territory elsewhere on the line of control. The enclave had become a major issue because both sides believed that surrendering it could prejudice their claims to all of the disputed state of Kashmir. Both sides presumably will maintain that the exchange of territory leaves their claims intact. Early progress on resolving the 25-year-old Kashmir dispute remains unlikely and both sides are apparently willing for the time being to live with the status quo.

India had made withdrawal of its troops from over 5,000 square miles of Pakistan conditional on delineation, and progress on troop withdrawals now is likely. Completion of delineation and troop withdrawals should open the way for negotiations on other problems remaining from the war in 1971. These could include the repatriation of Pakistani prisoners of war, plans by Bangladesh to try some prisoners of war as war criminals, Pakistani recognition of Dacca, and resumption of diplomatic relations between New Delhi and Islamabad.

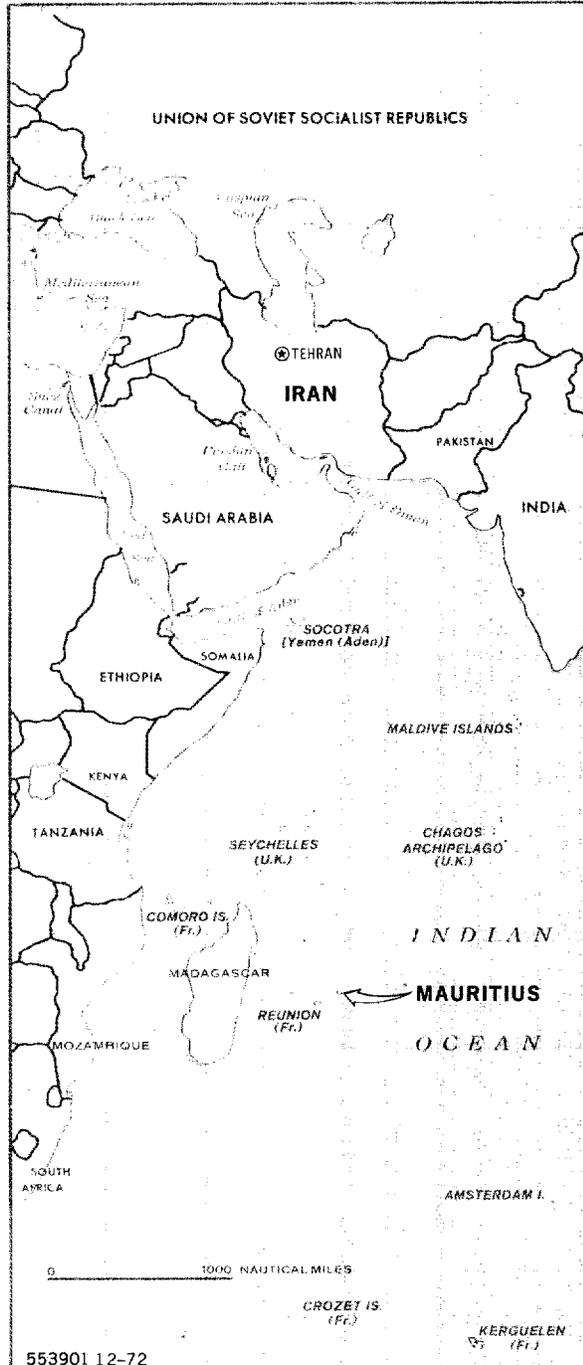
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IRAN-MAURITIUS: The Shah may accept an offer of port and communications facilities on the island of Mauritius as a means of advancing his ambition to extend naval operations into the Indian Ocean.

Prime Minister Ramgoolam announced during a recent official visit to Tehran that, although Mauritius was not permitting big powers to have military bases on the island, he would grant naval facilities to Iran, a "wealthy and powerful friend" with whom he is also anxious to promote closer economic ties. The Iranians have not responded publicly, but the Shah shares with Ramgoolam the view that regional cooperation is necessary to keep the Indian Ocean free of big-power hegemony and competition.

The Shah has long been determined to develop enough armed strength to deter adventures by potentially hostile neighbors and to ensure egress through the Persian Gulf for Iran's vital petroleum exports. Several years ago he thought largely in terms of defending the Gulf, but he subsequently extended this to the Gulf of Oman. He considerably broadened Iran's defense perimeter last month when, in a speech making public his intention to more than double the navy's striking force, he alluded to the need to look to the Indian Ocean, which "recognizes no frontiers."

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ROMANIA: Bucharest is likely to be admitted to the World Bank following its acceptance this week in the International Monetary Fund.

Participation in the two organizations should provide Romania added flexibility in dealing with its growing debt to the West. Qualifying as a developing country, Romania undoubtedly will apply for long-term World Bank development loans. Moreover, Romania, like Yugoslavia, may well be a candidate for short-term debt relief in the form of standby credits from the Fund.

Romania is the first member of the Communist Council for Mutual Economic Assistance to join the Fund since Poland and Czechoslovakia left in the 1950s. Romania will be required to subscribe in gold one quarter of its \$206-million quota in special drawing rights.

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AFGHANISTAN: The long-expected appointment on 6 December of Mohammad Musa Shafiq as prime minister to succeed the recently resigned Abdul Zahir is unlikely to lead to any significant change in domestic or foreign policies.

Shafiq, an intelligent and ambitious man who has served as foreign minister since 1971, has privately expressed the view that previous prime ministers have not exercised as much initiative as the King will allow. He may intend to act more independently, but he will probably hesitate to attempt any important departures from present policies. As foreign minister, Shafiq made Afghan policy somewhat more activist without departing from the country's neutralism.

Initially, Shafiq is likely to be more successful in dealing with Parliament than Zahir had been in recent months. Parliamentary infighting, a corrupt and inefficient bureaucracy, and the lack of a clear grant of authority from the King, however, may well ultimately make him no more successful than the last four men to hold the office.

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NOTE

SOUTH KOREA: Seoul will seek a large increase in loans from its Western aid donors who are scheduled to meet in Paris on Tuesday. The request for some \$1.4 billion, which includes both private and public loans for use in 1973, is 75 percent larger than the \$800 million received this year and probably overstates actual requirements by a large margin. The donors' decision will be strongly influenced by the World Bank's recent estimate that South Korea will need \$900 million in foreign loans in 1973. The loans will be used to help finance South Korea's third five-year development plan (1972-76), which aims at stimulating agricultural as well as industrial activity. The US has provided about 40 percent of South Korea's foreign loan capital. Japan, the second largest supplier, has provided about 20 percent and its share is likely to rise.



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