

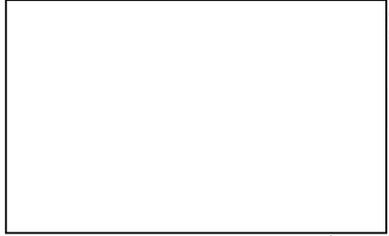


Director of  
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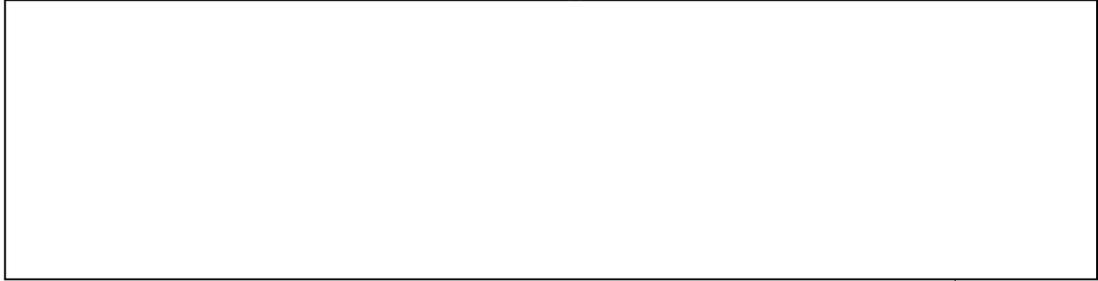
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BRIEFS AND COMMENTS

IRAQ-SYRIA: Joint Commands

*After four days of intense, secret negotiations, Syrian President Assad and Iraqi President Bakr announced the formation yesterday of joint political and military commands to coordinate the foreign, economic, and military policies of the two states. The move falls far short of Iraqi hopes for a full merger of the two governments and of the ruling Baath parties, but it does inject new life into the alliance.*

The two sides issued a political declaration that they have set up a unified political command headed by Assad and Bakr and established committees to prepare the way for a merger of the rival wings of the Baath and to work out details of a constitution. They also created a unified military command. The Iraqi Information Minister characterized the declaration as setting the stage for a complete merger.

COMMENT: As expected, the Syrians apparently continued to resist substantive changes in their Baath Party structure. Assad's representative to the Baath Party Committee is a close associate known to be suspicious of Iraq. In his remarks to the press, Bakr showed irritation with Assad's desire for a cautious, step-by-step approach to unity.

Many of the new measures are ambiguous and may prove to be little more than paper exercises, but they will allow the two sides to continue to cooperate on selected issues. The new political command appears to do little more than replace an already existing structure. The Israelis are certain to be alarmed, however, if there are any substantive moves to follow up the promised joint military command.