



The President's Daily Brief



25 July 1969

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I: MAJOR PROBLEMS

MIDDLE EAST

Israel apparently has decided to escalate the exchanges with Egypt across the Suez Canal. Until last Sunday the Israelis, chary as always of risking too many casualties, avoided using aircraft on this front. They have mounted three air strikes since then, however, and their spokesman left a strong impression yesterday that this would be the pattern in the future.

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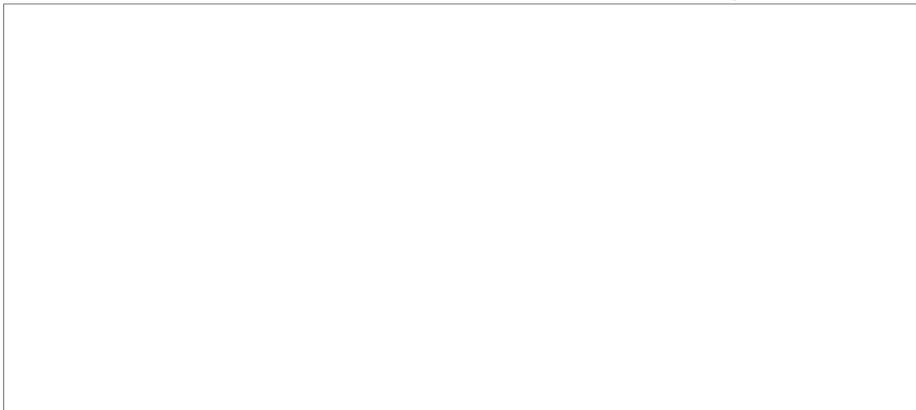
For their part, the Egyptians seem not at all inclined to scale down the level of hostilities. Even before his blustery speech on Wednesday, Nasir indicated he felt compelled to harass the Israelis along the canal. The Egyptians seem so eager to have something they can point to as a victory that at least for the moment they are willing to ignore their own heavy losses. In the face of Israeli pounding, their air force has kept up its high rate of activity in recent days and has now begun its own strikes against Israeli positions near the canal.

The welter of conflicting claims makes it almost impossible to reach a firm estimate of the damage the two sides are inflicting on each other. For what it is worth, however, the Israelis now claim to have shot down 20 Egyptian planes this month. They admit to losing two of their own.

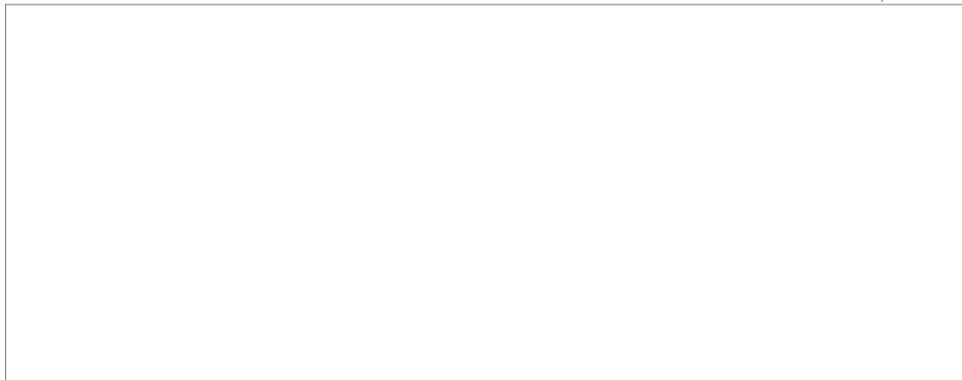
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SOVIET AFFAIRS

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II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

SOUTH KOREA

President Pak last night laid his prestige on the line in announcing his support of a constitutional amendment that would permit him to run for a third term in 1971. After assembly

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

passage, the amendment would be put to a national referendum--possibly late this year. In a tactic reminiscent of De Gaulle, Pak said he would "step down immediately" if the referendum vote were negative.

BOLIVIA

Armando Escobar, a retired general who has been mayor of La Paz since 1964, has decided to run for president next year. He has no following in the military, but he is extremely popular with Bolivian civilians--so much so that he would have a good chance of beating Armed Forces Chief Ovando in a fair election. His announcement could even trigger a pre-emptive coup by Ovando.

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