



The President's Daily Brief

12 December 1973

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

12 December 1973

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Syrian Government reportedly has reinstated some of the same civil defense measures it took before the attack of October 6. Cairo has threatened the reimposition of a full blockade of the Bab al-Mandab Straits unless Israel allows Egyptian ships now in various Red Sea ports to return to Suez City for repairs. (Page 1)

The new civilian government in Thailand will send an official delegation to China around December 21. (Page 3)

[redacted] talk of a coup is developing among senior Thai military officers, [redacted]

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Soviet [redacted]

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(Page 5)

A note on the approval of some 30 tariff concessions by the EC Council of Ministers appears on Page 5.

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ARAB STATES - ISRAEL

UN sources report that the Syrian Ministry of Planning has been put on a "war basis," and that all other ministries and schools have been alerted to go on a war footing as soon as instructed. The measures taken by the ministry require all personnel to operate in underground shelters 24 hours a day.

The Syrian Government apparently took similar measures in the week prior to the attack on October 6. If the above reports are accurate, the civil defense measures may be part of a general Syrian and Egyptian policy to maintain an atmosphere of tension and of readiness to return to war if Israel does not move toward a settlement. Such measures, however, could also be an indicator of a plan to reopen hostilities.

For the second straight day, Syrian and Israeli forces exchanged fire on the Golan front. The Syrians claimed to have inflicted about a dozen casualties and to have destroyed several pieces of engineering equipment that were being used to improve advanced Israeli positions in the area.

Continuing military activity on the Egyptian front, although minor, is resulting in a higher casualty rate than that reported in late November. The Israelis have turned over to the Red Cross the names of 32 Egyptians captured in incidents since the completion of Egyptian-Israeli prisoner exchange on November 22. The Egyptians do not admit holding any Israeli prisoners.

The Egyptians are claiming publicly that ammunition is reaching the Third Army via the Gulf of Suez. The Israelis presumably are alert to attempts to infiltrate weapons and probably are capable of intercepting such shipments. Limited amounts--enough to sustain Third Army morale, however--may be getting through.

General Gamasy, Egypt's negotiator at the stalled disengagement talks, complained yesterday to the United Nations Emergency Force commander, General Siilasvuo, about Israel's refusal to permit

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resupply of an isolated Egyptian garrison located to the north of the Third Army. Gamasy threatened that when these troops run out of supplies within a few days, Egypt will feel compelled to use force. UN sources comment that Israel had agreed to the evacuation of this garrison, as Egypt had originally requested, but that Cairo later decided it keep it in place.

Gamasy has also informed Siilasvuo of Egypt's proposal that Israel allow Egyptian ships now in various Red Sea ports to return to Suez City for repairs. Gamasy reportedly linked this proposal to the question of Israeli transit of the Bab al-Mandab Straits. He threatened the reimposition of a full blockade of the straits if Israel does not permit Egyptian ships access to Suez City.

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THAILAND-CHINA

The new civilian government in Bangkok is re-
suming the Sino-Thai dialogue. In response to a
Chinese invitation, Deputy Foreign Minister Chartchai
will lead an official delegation to Peking around
December 21.

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[Redacted]

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[Redacted] Bangkok appears particularly interested
in the possibility of purchasing Chinese petroleum
products and has been encouraged by Peking's favor-
able response to a recent Thai bid to buy high-speed
diesel oil.

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The Thai may also suggest that the Chinese post
a permanent mission to ECAFE headquarters in Bangkok.
This would permit the Thai to establish a political
relationship with China short of diplomatic rela-
tions. The new government, although no more likely
than the former Thai leadership to take precipitous
action, is under pressure from students and critics
within the bureaucracy to strike a more independent
and "neutral" foreign posture.

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THAILAND

Talk of a coup is developing among senior Thai military officers as labor unrest in Bangkok increases. Army chief General Krit Sivara

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In remarks to the press last week, Krit emphasized that Prime Minister Sanya has the authority to take strong measures to quell strikes and disorders, and he implied that military intervention would not be necessary.

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The country's major student organization returned a moderate slate to office after elections last week. The moderate leaders had resigned a month ago in the face of criticism from activist and radical students. The results of the new election should ease the army's concern over the general situation and increase the government's confidence in its ability to control the students.

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NOTES

Czechoslovakia-USSR:

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European Communities: The EC Council of Ministers on December 10 approved some 30 tariff concessions designed to compensate non-EC countries for higher export costs resulting from the increase in the community's membership last January. Although the specific concessions have not yet been announced, they apparently are not significantly different from proposals made early last month. These fell far short of the desires of the US and other affected countries. The concessions will be presented formally to the community's trading partners at GATT headquarters in Geneva within a few days.

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