



The President's Daily Brief

September 17, 1975

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

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Table of Contents

USSR - Middle East: The Soviets privately have given the new Sinai disengagement agreement a mixed review, but their comments suggest that they will not block the accord. (Page 1)

Lebanon: The security situation in Tripoli and Beirut took a turn for the worse yesterday. (Page 3)

Notes: North Vietnam - Libya; Kuwait-USSR-Syria; USSR (Page 4)

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USSR - MIDDLE EAST

The Soviets privately have given the new Sinai disengagement agreement a mixed review. Their comments suggest, however, that they are more concerned about staking out a role for themselves in new Middle East negotiations than blocking the accord.

The deputy head of the Soviet Foreign Ministry's Arab-Israeli office, Yevgeny Pyrlin, told [redacted] last week that although the agreement kept the guns silent and led to a small Israeli withdrawal, it had its faults--the main one being the introduction of US personnel into the Sinai. He also criticized the failure of the agreement to deal with the question of a broad Arab-Israeli settlement. With an eye on Secretary Kissinger's meeting with Foreign Minister Gromyko on Thursday, the Soviet official said the USSR would not take a definite position on UN policing of the agreement until Moscow got a clearer reading of US intentions on the question.

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Last Friday in Washington, another Soviet diplomat raised the threat of Soviet obstructionism more directly. He contended the UN Emergency Force was no longer needed in the Sinai because the Egyptian-Israeli agreement amounted to a peace treaty of indefinite duration. Such bluster, of which we may hear more, seems more an effort to impress the US with the need to take the USSR's interests into account in the future than a portent of a Soviet veto. Comments by the Soviets seem to imply that they will find it easier to swallow UN policing of the agreement if Moscow is not called on to endorse the agreement directly or to accept formally the idea of a separate US presence in the Sinai.

Pyrlin's comments suggest that at this juncture Moscow's real concern is to nail down a role for itself in subsequent negotiations, particularly regarding the Golan Heights. Pyrlin indicated that a Golan disengagement could be a plus if it were explicitly billed as an aspect of a total settlement, if Moscow participated in its negotiation, and if it offered something to the Palestinians.

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The Soviet was notably flexible on the question of a format for future talks. After noting the problems blocking a formal reconvening of the Geneva conference, he said that until these problems were resolved, negotiations could still proceed so long as they involved all the Geneva parties. The Soviets are calling this plan the "step-by-step within the Geneva framework."

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LEBANON

The security situation took a turn for the worse yesterday as leftist Muslims seized more police posts in Tripoli and fighting spread in Beirut.

[Redacted]

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One of the most significant developments of the past few days has been the emergence of PLO leader Yasir Arafat as an acknowledged power in Lebanese domestic politics while President Franjijah has been almost totally eclipsed.

[Redacted]

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Former prime minister Saib Salam, a Beirut Muslim leader, left yesterday for Damascus to seek help from Syria in ending the fighting.

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NOTES

North Vietnam [redacted] has sold six to eight US C-130 cargo aircraft to Libya.

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[redacted]

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[redacted] At least ten serviceable C-130 transports were left in the South when Saigon fell last April. The aircraft will supplement Libya's fleet of eight C-130s supplied by the US several years ago. This is the first evidence that Hanoi has sold captured US equipment.

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Kuwait, [redacted] has agreed to buy two squadrons of MIG-23 jet fighters from the USSR for Syria.

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Moscow probably will agree to this sale, worth an estimated \$100 million. Since the Middle East war in October 1973, the USSR has provided Syria with more than \$1 billion of arms, some of which were paid for by other Arab states, including Kuwait. Two squadrons of MIG-23s would add about 24 of the aircraft to the 36 Syria now has. This military purchase would bring Kuwait's financial support for Syria since the outbreak of Arab-Israeli hostilities in 1973 to \$1 billion.

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Soviets [redacted]

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[redacted]

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