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The President's Daily Brief

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December 12, 1975

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

LEBANON

Radical leftists yesterday announced their acceptance, with conditions, of Prime Minister Karami's latest call for a truce. They say they will decide after meeting with him whether to negotiate a durable cease-fire.

One of the leftists' conditions is that Karami meet with them to explain the government's use of the army in Beirut's commercial center this week. They also want an explanation of a speech by President Franjiah on Wednesday, which the leftists believe placed undue blame on them for the continued fighting.

Leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organization played a role in the leftists' decision on a cease-fire. One of the PLO leaders, Zuhayr Muhsin, told newsmen the Palestinians had been able to mediate because, as he put it, "they are not a party to the conflict."

Muhsin is head of the Syrian-controlled Saiqa fedayeen group. His involvement in negotiations and recent attempts to keep his followers out of the fighting are part of Syria's behind-the-scenes effort to end the clashes.

Palestinian and Lebanese groups closely allied with Syria, unlike the independent or Iraqi-supported leftists, have cooperated from the start in Karami's efforts to stop the fighting.

Representatives of the two largest Christian political parties, the Phalangists and the National Liberals, have said their groups will respect a cease-fire. A Phalangist representative has also pledged his party to allow an official inquiry into the causes of the killing of Muslims last weekend that set off the current round of fighting.

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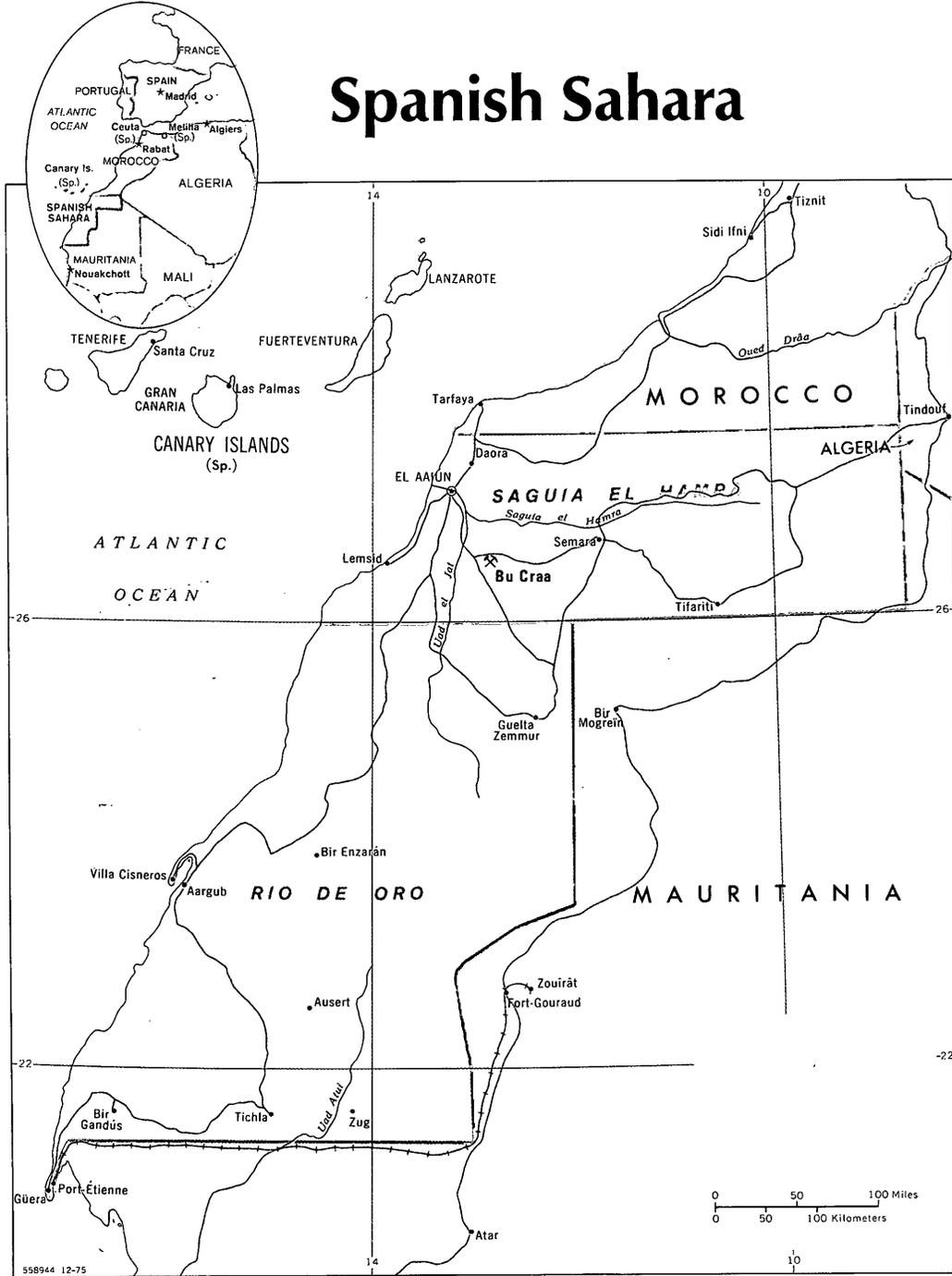
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The US embassy foresees serious consequences within weeks if the country's leaders remain unable to reduce the fighting through political negotiations.

Among the consequences foreseen by the embassy, in ascending order of importance for the US, are:

- The resignation of Karami and Franjiyah.
- The collapse of the Lebanese government.
- An army coup.
- Efforts by ultra-conservative Christians to partition the country.
- Syrian and Israeli intervention in Lebanon.

Spanish Sahara



SPANISH SAHARA

Morocco is strengthening its security forces in northern Spanish Sahara in anticipation of an early Spanish withdrawal from the territory.

A Spanish Foreign Ministry official recently said all Spanish troops and civilians will be out of Sahara by December 20; the withdrawal had been scheduled to be completed in February. The Spanish want to avoid involvement in hostilities between Morocco and the Polisario Front or its sponsor, Algeria.

Yesterday, the first Moroccan army units arrived in El Aaiun, the capital, and were greeted by Moroccan officials already on the scene. Moroccan police units have been stationed in El Aaiun for several weeks and are beginning to move into some outlying towns.

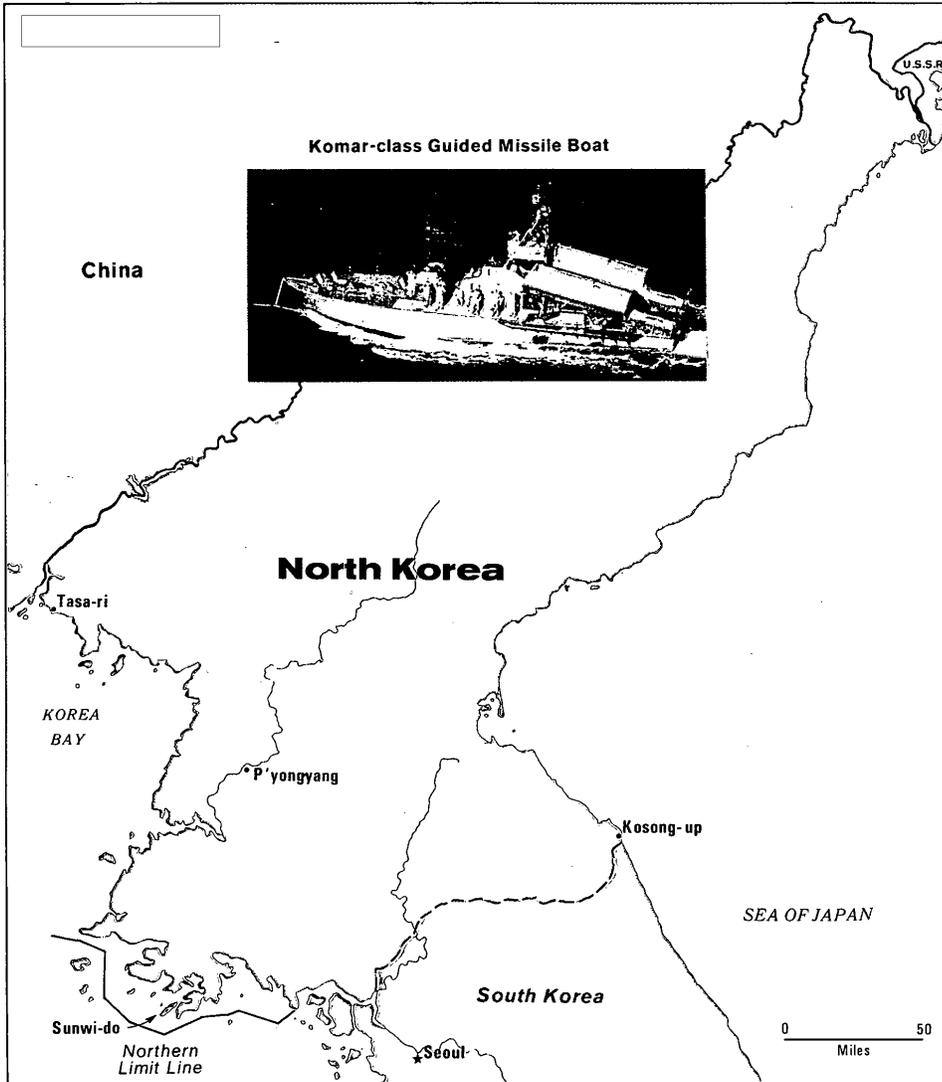
King Hassan's forces are continuing operations in the northeastern part of the territory against guerrillas of the Polisario Front. The Moroccans will not easily suppress the guerrillas, who are now using mortars, machine guns, and grenade launchers.

Algiers is as opposed as ever to a Moroccan-Mauritanian takeover of Spanish Sahara and has undertaken a limited military build-up in southwestern Algeria adjacent to Sahara. The government is staging demonstrations throughout the country designed to whip up anti-Moroccan sentiment and, we believe, to develop domestic support for increased Algerian assistance to the Polisario guerrillas.

Debate on Spanish Sahara in the UN General Assembly has ended with the adoption of two contradictory resolutions. Algeria was unable to get a formal UN disavowal of the Spanish-Moroccan-Mauritanian agreement that provided for partition of the territory between Morocco and Mauritania.

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NOTES

North Korea has shifted two of its east coast Komar guided-missile boats to a base less than ten miles from the east coast Northern Limit Line.

This parallels a similar move earlier this year on the west coast. These moves together give the North Koreans a stronger naval presence in areas of possible confrontation with South Korea.

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The incident yesterday in which an Icelandic patrol boat was rammed by two British support ships inside Iceland's 12-mile limit is a major escalation of the fishing dispute.

British officials had hoped to avoid serious incidents during the NATO foreign ministers' meeting now under way in Brussels. London feared that an incident at sea would embroil NATO directly in the dispute. Iceland reportedly intended, in fact, to make a relatively moderate plea for support. This incident, however, will increase pressures on the Icelandic government to seek support from its NATO allies. The Icelandic cabinet decided last night to submit a complaint about the ramming to the UN Security Council.

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The Liberal-Country caretaker government appears likely to win control of both houses of parliament in the election in Australia tomorrow.

Late public opinion polls, which have a good record in Australia, give the Liberal-Country coalition a 14-point lead over the Labor Party. Labor leader Whitlam's vigorous campaigning could win back a few votes, but he has been hard put to explain away charges of serious economic mismanagement during Labor's nearly three years in office. Liberal leader Fraser has been sufficiently confident to confine himself to generalities.

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The new Spanish cabinet, which is to be sworn in today or tomorrow, promises a break with the past. It is liberal in Spanish terms, as King Juan Carlos and Prime Minister Arias try to take some of the wind out of the opposition's sails.

Manuel Fraga Iribarne, the new interior minister, and Jose Maria de Areilza, the new foreign minister, favor an early and fairly extensive liberalization of the political system. Most of the other posts are filled by men who favor gradual, but significant, change. The cabinet will have to move quickly to deal with demonstrations and strikes organized by the left. Thousands of industrial workers struck yesterday as labor action spread from Madrid to other industrial areas including Barcelona, the northern Basque country, and the Asturias coal mines.

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