

The President's Daily Brief

June 3, 1976

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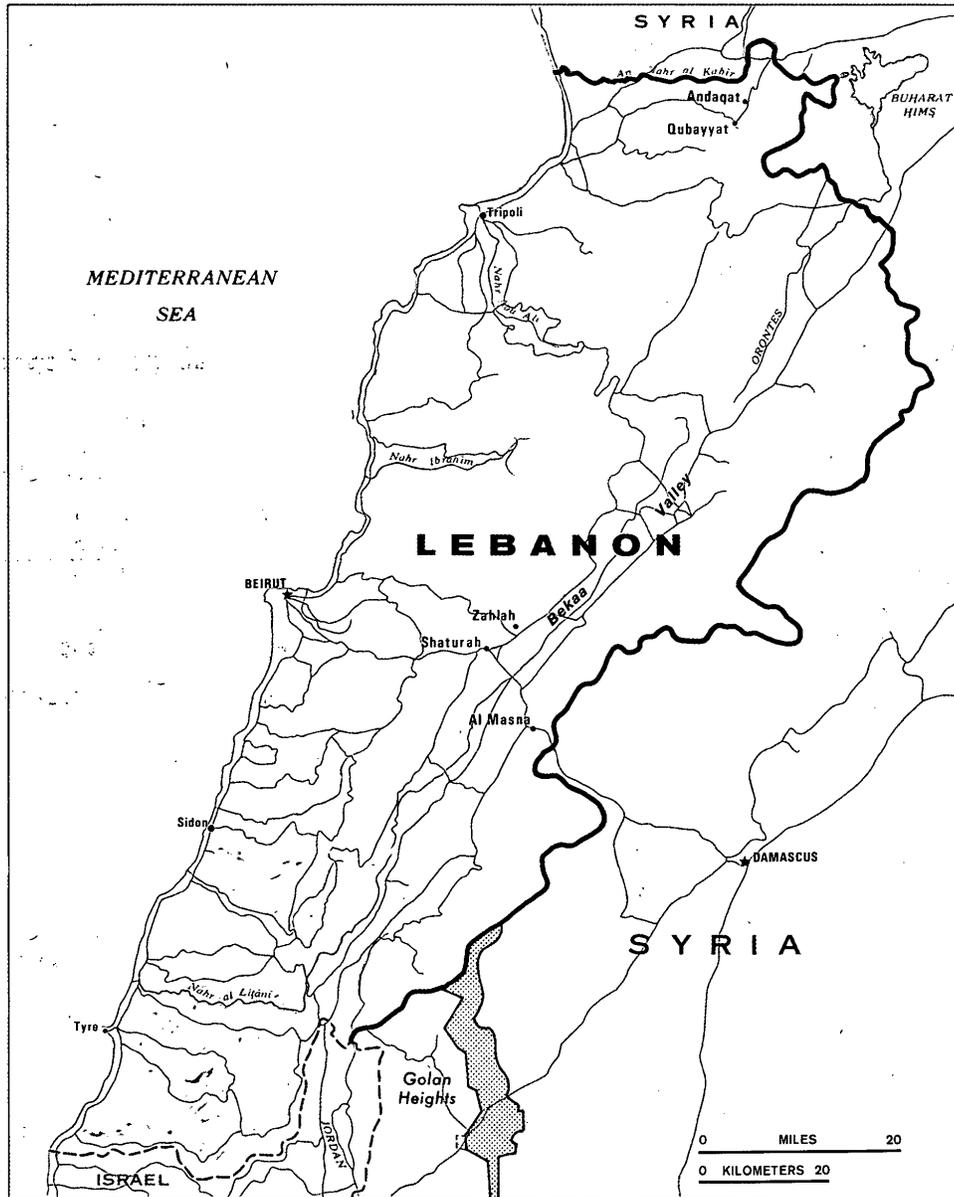
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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

LEBANON-SYRIA: *No new Syrian forces have been detected moving into Lebanon in the past 48 hours.*

We estimate that there are now about 3,000 Syrian troops and nearly 100 tanks in eastern Lebanon. This total includes two infantry battalions that have been at Al-Masna since mid-April. Some additional Syrian forces [redacted]

[redacted] are located just across the border in Syria.

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The Syrian troops that entered central Lebanon Tuesday and moved to Shaturah and Zahlah apparently were from the armored brigade that has been astride the central Syria-Lebanon border near Al-Masna since mid-April.

There has been no significant resistance by Palestinian and leftist forces to Syria's advance in eastern Lebanon. [redacted]

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We have been unable to confirm press claims that Syrian troops are in Sidon and have secured its port and large oil refinery complex. As many as 300 Syrian regular troops disguised as Palestinian Saiqa forces have been there since early April to intercept arms deliveries to leftist and Palestinian forces. The Syrians have been reluctant to augment this contingent because of Israeli warnings that Syrian troops must stay out of southern Lebanon.

The US defense attache in Tel Aviv reported yesterday that the Israeli military does not appear to have increased its readiness posture in reaction to Syrian moves in Lebanon.

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USSR-SYRIA: *The escalation of the Syrian intervention in Lebanon on the eve of Soviet Premier Kosygin's arrival in Damascus has put the Russian in an awkward position.*

Kosygin undoubtedly is under strong pressure from the Palestinians and the leftist Lebanese to rein in Damascus. On Tuesday he publicly voiced mild criticism of Syrian actions in Lebanon, saying Moscow opposes "imperialist interference" in "any form whatsoever."

It is doubtful that at this juncture Moscow has the will to do more than this. The Soviets still value Syria as a counterweight to Egypt, and want to avoid any action that might encourage Damascus to rely on the US for the arrangement of a settlement with Israel.

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SYRIA: *President Asad's domestic vulnerability could further increase if the latest Syrian intervention in Lebanon does not promote a political breakthrough. Despite the risks, Asad is unlikely to withdraw unilaterally from his commitment to obtain a solution in Lebanon.*

There is a danger that Lebanon's confessional strife might spread to Syria. There already have been attacks on members of Asad's minority Alawite sect by leading elements of the conservative Sunni Muslim opposition. There also have been numerous reports in recent months that Syrian military officers are disturbed by Asad's support for Lebanon's Christians. Asad, however, presumably secured the backing of his principal military commanders before he introduced additional troops this week.

Despite his reported concern about the overall reliability of the Syrian military in the present situation, Asad may well inject more troops into Lebanon if the political stalemate persists. The Syrian President clearly is determined to recoup the stature he lost when the Syrian-engineered settlement in January collapsed and to ensure the transfer of power to president-elect Sarkis.

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Asad may be calculating that the presence of a large Syrian force gives Sarkis a trump card in his negotiations with the leftists. Sarkis is now in a position to offer to negotiate the withdrawal of most--if not all--of the Syrians in return for leftist cooperation.

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LEBANON: *President-elect Ilyas Sarkis has so far managed not only to dissociate himself from Syria's decision to intervene but also to use the Syrian move to advance his peace proposal.*

Sarkis held his long-awaited meeting with leftist leader Kamal Jumblatt yesterday and apparently gained Jumblatt's approval to convene roundtable settlement talks as soon as possible.

Jumblatt issued a statement following the meeting in which he warmly praised Sarkis, calling him a man of conscience and independence. Only weeks ago Jumblatt had treated Sarkis as little more than a Syrian puppet and had refused to accept the validity of his election to the presidency.

Although Jumblatt coupled his praise with calls for an immediate Syrian withdrawal, the tone of his remarks suggests that he may now believe that cooperation with Sarkis is the only way to get the Syrian troops out.

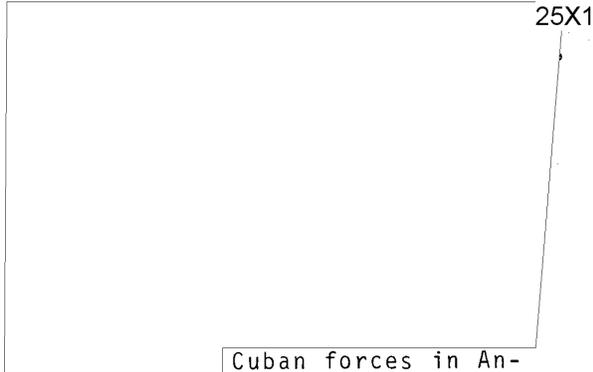
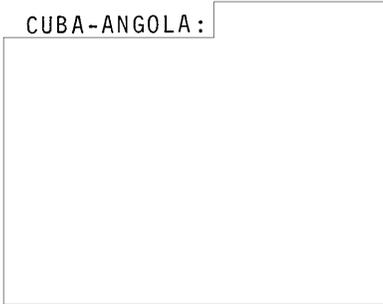
Jumblatt apparently also met yesterday with the son of Christian Phalanges Party leader Pierre Jumayyil. So far we have no information on the results of the meeting, which representatives of the two leaders have been trying for weeks to arrange.

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CUBA-ANGOLA:



Cuban forces in Angola would be withdrawn only at the request of the Angolan government, and that such a request had not yet been made. This echoes what Cuban Deputy Prime Minister Rodriguez told the press in late May during a visit to Mexico.

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ZAIRE-ANGOLA: *Presidents Mobutu of Zaire and Neto of Angola do not seem to be making much progress in implementing the reconciliation agreement they reached last March. Their long-standing mutual distrust is apparently the main stumbling block.*

Mobutu's chief political adviser recently told US officials that relations with Angola were becoming embittered. He accused the Angolans of refusing to honor several of the agreement's provisions, including the voluntary repatriation to Zaire of the former Katangan secessionists who took refuge in Angola in 1963.

The adviser also complained that the Angolan government is stalling on putting the Benguela railroad, an important trade artery for Zaire, back into operation. Other information indicates that the railroad's operations are being hampered by well entrenched National Union guerrillas in central Angola.

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On the Angolan side, according to the adviser, Neto recently accused Zaire of continuing to train guerilla forces of the National Front and to support their cross-border operations. The adviser argued that National Front troops are operating on their own and are not allowed to use Zairian territory.

The two presidents probably will continue to find fault with each other. The joint commission established to work out the details of their agreement is operating under an intentionally vague charter, and mutual suspicion is deep.

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USSR-RHODESIA: *Rhodesian black nationalist leader Joshua Nkomo has arrived quietly in Moscow on the heels of visits there by Mozambican President Machel and Angolan Prime Minister Nascimento.*

Nkomo has long-standing links with Moscow. He probably hopes that a visit now will help bolster his faltering position among Rhodesian nationalists. Much of Nkomo's influence has shifted to more militant rivals following the collapse of settlement talks with Rhodesian Prime Minister Smith in March.

The Soviets have yet to make any announcement of Nkomo's visit. Moscow apparently does not want to offend Machel and other black African leaders by openly favoring any particular Rhodesian nationalist leader. Moreover, in the aftermath of the Angolan conflict, Moscow's overall approach to the Rhodesian and Namibian problems has been relatively cautious.

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USSR-PHILIPPINES: *Philippine President Marcos' first state visit to the USSR seems to be proceeding according to plan.*

The Soviets have given Marcos the top-level attention he demanded as a prerequisite for the trip. Marcos has had two sessions with President Podgorny and other Soviet

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officials and one "friendly, businesslike" meeting with General Secretary Brezhnev. The two sides yesterday announced the establishment of diplomatic relations and the conclusion of a trade agreement.

At the Soviet dinner in honor of Marcos, he pointedly expressed the hope that Moscow would continue to pursue peaceful policies in Asia and elsewhere. Podgorny responded by stressing the need for all Asians to work together for Asian peace and security. This is the new formulation the Soviets have adopted to seek Asian support for Brezhnev's seven-year-old Asian collective security idea.

During the preliminary negotiations on the final Soviet-Philippine communique, there were indications that, in return for a favorable Soviet reference to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Marcos might be prepared to endorse the new, watered-down version of Brezhnev's proposal. The communique is likely to be issued on Sunday, the final day of Marcos' visit.

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