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EGYPT-USSR: President Sadat said yesterday that the failure of the USSR to honor commitments to Egypt in 1971 led to the current state of Soviet-Egyptian relations. He added, however, that the real cause of the Middle East impasse was the firm US support for Israel.

Sadat, in a rambling and repetitive speech to the Arab Socialist Union (ASU) National Congress, said that differences of view became apparent during his trip to Moscow as president in March 1971, but that these were disagreements between friends and gaps which could be bridged "in the coming stages." He went on to say that during Soviet President Podgorny's trip to Cairo in May 1971 to sign the treaty of friendship, he was assured by the Soviets that the main differences between them would be solved within four days of Podgorny's return to Moscow. Sadat said that still no satisfaction had arrived by October when he was given another Soviet promise for implementation of "this definite agreement between us on this and that and so forth." The year passed--Sadat's self-proclaimed "year of decision"--and the disagreement continued, which, in short, led to his frustrations and his final action last week.

The Egyptian President did not specify the real nature of the differences nor of the Soviet commitment; to do so, he said, would play into the hands of Egypt's enemies. The speech was replete with references to firm US military, political, and economic aid to Israel, pledges of support which have been implemented "automatically and most enthusiastically and violently," in contrast to the limited Soviet response to Egypt's pleas for help.

The speech seemed primarily designed to salve some of the wounds in Moscow and included little ground not covered in some of his earlier speeches or spoken of in Egyptian media. He did make another plea to the ASU delegates to work for national unity of the Egyptian and Arab people.

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EGYPT-ISRAEL: Yesterday morning Egyptian air defense forces launched several surface-to-air missiles across the Suez Canal.

The Egyptians claimed that at least one Israeli F-4 was downed; the Israelis deny any loss. This is the second Egyptian-Israeli air incident this year. On 13 June two Egyptian MIG-21s were shot down when they tried to interfere with an Israeli reconnaissance mission over Egypt's Mediterranean coast.

The incident on 13 June is rumored to have been the result of an attempt by Egyptian pilots to intercept an Israeli flight against Soviet orders or advice, and the incident is said to have become another point of friction between Egyptian and Soviet officers. Egyptian motives and intentions for yesterday's action can only be speculated upon.

President Sadat and a large political and military entourage visited frontline areas on 23 July, and it has been implicit in Sadat's speeches and Muhammad Haykal's political columns that Egypt must recreate a credible threat of Egyptian military action against Israel in order to induce some movement toward a settlement of the no-war, no-peace situation. Even an isolated aerial clash over the ceasefire lines would help to serve Sadat's purpose of raising international fears of new hostilities.

Israeli political leaders may be restrained from retaliating for fear of the effect such an action could have on the Soviet evacuation. In the past, however, Israeli doctrine has been to discourage Egyptian attacks by direct retaliation. Israeli military officials are likely to argue that now is a particularly poor time to deviate from this policy.

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