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EGYPT: The exercise and alert activities under way in Egypt may be on a somewhat larger scale and more realistic than previous exercises, but they do not appear to be preparations for a military offensive against Israel.

These activities initially were reflected in an alert of the air defense and air forces on 26 September. Ground and naval elements subsequently also became active in the exercise. [redacted]

Cairo usually conducts such exercises in the fall and spring. The scenario usually involves defending against an Israeli assault across the Suez Canal and then launching a counterattack. It is unusual, but not without precedent, for Egyptian forces to exercise during Ramadan, the Moslem month of religious fasting.

Previous Egyptian exercises have been more paper-and-communications exercises than the current one, which evidently involves the mobilization of larger numbers of personnel. The actual number of troops involved is not known. The movement of commando units and the use of a more secure means of communication make the exercise more realistic. Because of this realism, Cairo may have put its air defense and air forces on alert in preparation for the exercise and as a precaution against an Israeli reaction. The call-up of air force reservists is on a larger scale than that which occurred during the last major exercise in March, but this may be necessary because of the length of the alert.

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5 Oct 73

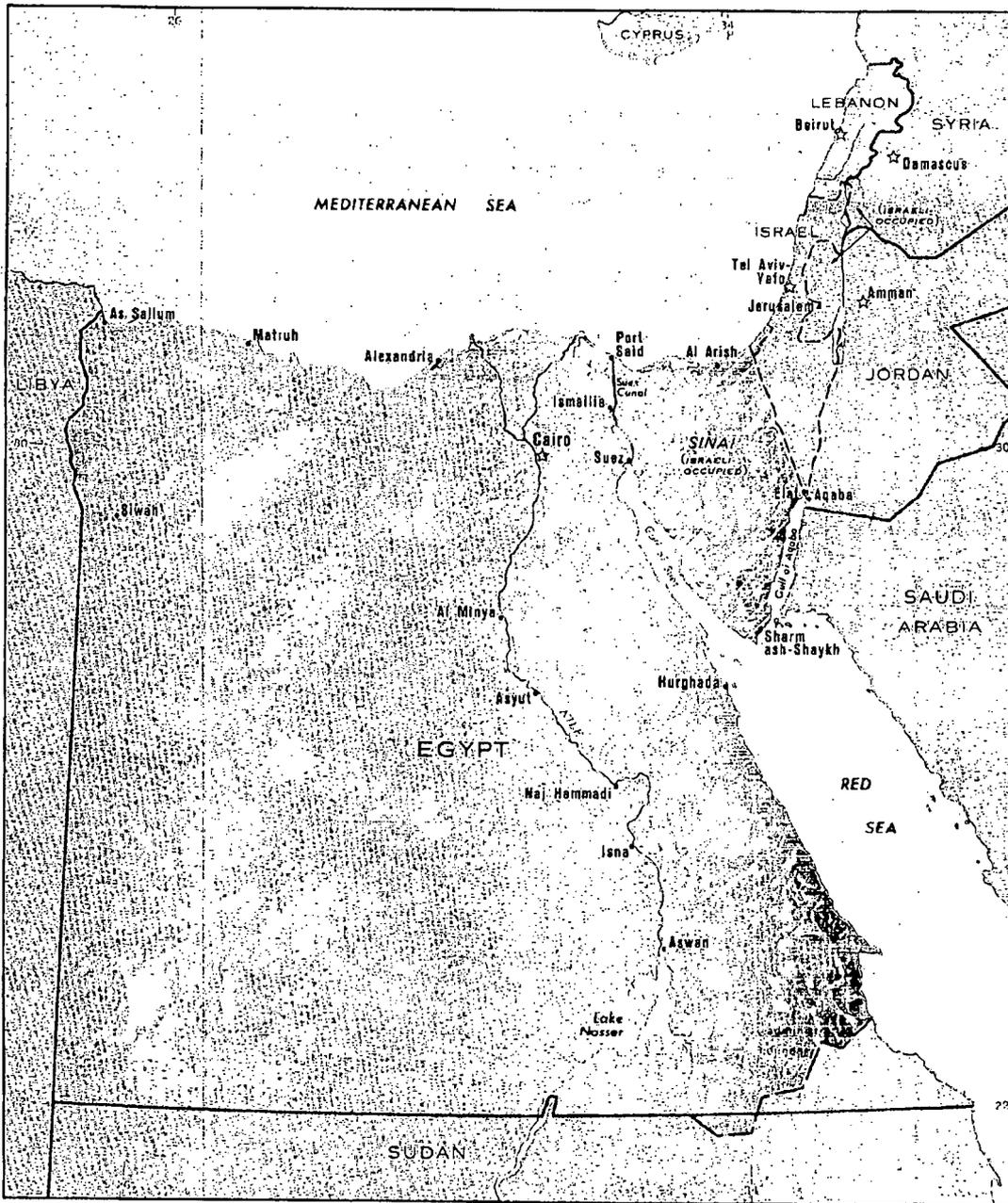
Central Intelligence Bulletin

5

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LIBYA: President Qadhafi reportedly is again planning to resign because of his disappointment over the hollow unity agreement with Egypt.

[redacted] Qadhafi actually resigned soon after his failure in late August to gain concessions on the merger from President Sadat. [redacted] the RCC reportedly protested Qadhafi's decision, but were only able to persuade him to remain in office long enough--perhaps several months--to prepare for a smooth transfer of power.

The temperamental Libyan leader has been subdued since his personal as well as political defeat at the hands of the Egyptians. Over the last several weeks he has avoided public appearances and has taken some measures to divest himself of some of the trappings of his office. Although he is still acting very much like a chief of state with supreme authority, several other RCC members--particularly Prime Minister Jallud--are unusually busy with policies and programs generally regarded as Qadhafi's exclusive province.

Many factors could improve Qadhafi's spirits in the months ahead--not the least of which is his seemingly unshakeable belief in his own abilities and the rightness of his cause. Nevertheless, the deepening estrangement between Sadat and Qadhafi is wearing heavily on the Libyan leader. Sadat has made it clear that he will not bend to Qadhafi's unity drive nor will he tolerate Libyan meddling in Egyptian affairs. During last week's anniversary celebrations of Nasir's death, Qadhafi was refused permission to address a student rally in Alexandria and was extended a less than enthusiastic invitation to the ceremonies in Cairo. Despite this coolness, Qadhafi arrived in Egypt unannounced and left shortly thereafter, having accomplished nothing more than a respectful private visit to Nasir's tomb.

5 Aug 73

Central Intelligence Bulletin

6

~~TOP SECRET~~~~TOP SECRET~~

USSR-SYRIA: Moscow reportedly has given Syria the KA-25 Hormone helicopter. At least nine KA-25s have been assembled at a Syrian air base since early September [redacted] Syria is the first Soviet military aid recipient to acquire this helicopter, which is used by the Soviets for reconnaissance and utility purposes as well as in anti-submarine operations. The helicopters were probably ordered under the Soviet-Syrian arms agreement of May 1972. Syria has previously received about 40 MI-8 helicopters, 17 of which were delivered earlier this year. [redacted]

5 Oct 73

*Central Intelligence Bulletin*

7

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