

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
29 October 1973

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

MIDDLE EAST

Situation Report Number 92
(As of 1500 EST)

DIA Review
Completed.

THE MILITARY SITUATION

State Dept. review completed

GENERAL

(All times cited in military paragraphs are Cairo/Tel Aviv time, unless otherwise specified.)

1. Both the Egyptian and Syrian fronts are generally calm, although UN observers reported explosions and small arms fire in the vicinity of Suez City late this morning. Egyptian forces made an unsuccessful attempt to bridge the canal north of Suez City this morning, according to Israeli sources. Iraqi units have been ordered to withdraw from both fronts, according to Radio Baghdad.

THE EGYPTIAN FRONT

2. The Egyptian front remained generally peaceful today, but UN observers reported explosions and firing in the vicinity of Suez city. An Israeli military spokesman provided some additional details on the Egyptian helicopters reported trying to reach the Third Army early this morning. He reported that one MI-8 was downed by ground fire, a second by fighters, but one or more may have reached the Third Army. Other helicopters turned back after being attacked by the Israelis.

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3. UN patrols reported small arms fire and explosions in the vicinity of Suez City late this morning. A UN patrol last noted some six miles northwest of Suez reported two jets west of its position at 1033 and two explosions to the northwest. At 1140, the same patrol reported small arms fire and three heavy explosions near Suez City.

4. At 1154, another UN patrol about five miles southwest of Suez City noted one aircraft north of its position and six heavy explosions and a smoke column in Suez City.

5. According to the chief Israeli liaison officer, Egyptian forces attempted to put a bridge across the canal during the night from the east to west bank north of Suez City. He said the bridge was broken by the water current at about 0630 before Israeli forces could destroy it. According to a press report, however, an Israeli colonel reported that Israeli troops using mostly small arms fire had broken up the bridging attempt, which the colonel described as a minor Egyptian effort. There is no evidence that Israeli aircraft attacked the bridge, although Israeli planes have been noted along the canal.

6. The Israeli liaison officer also claimed that Egyptian forces fired three rockets--which he did not describe--from Port Tawfiz at 0215 today to the southwest but caused no damage.

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THE SYRIAN FRONT

9. The Syrian front remains quiet. Iraq is continuing the withdrawal of its forces from Syria. Radio Baghdad reported today that Iraqi units would be withdrawn from the two fronts and returned home. Baghdad said the units no longer have a "pan-Arab combat duty to fulfill" and the presence of its armed forces raises "delicate and serious military and security matters."

ISRAEL

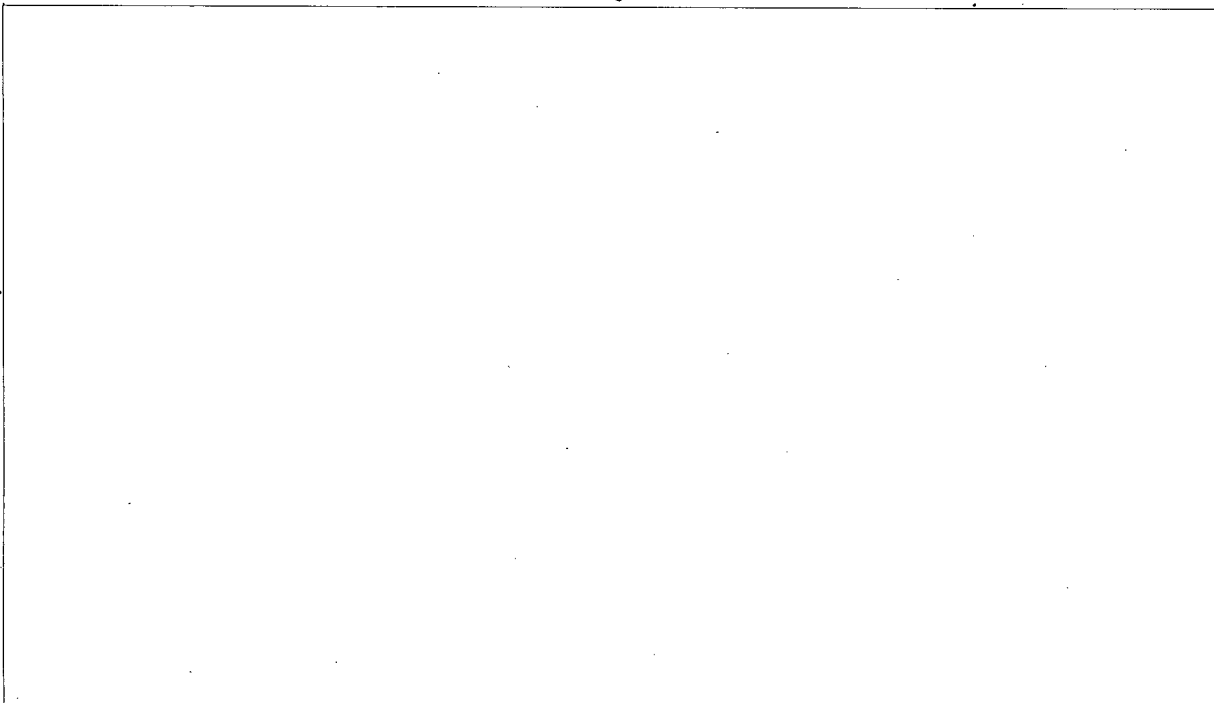
11. A respected and reliable Israeli commentator told US Embassy officials today that during the meeting between Israeli and Egyptian military officers on 28 October General Yariv gave his Egyptian counterpart a proposal for the pull-back of Israeli forces from the west bank of the Canal and the withdrawal of Egyptian troops from the east bank. The Israeli newsman did not reveal any other aspects of the proposal but claimed that he had received his information from Mrs. Meir and General Dayan during a briefing of selected media officials.

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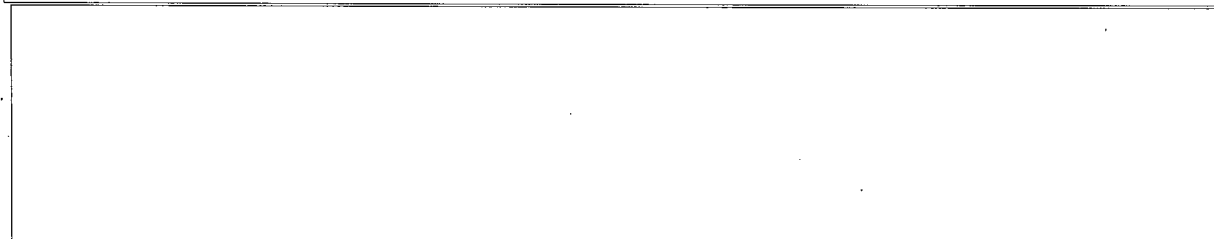
No Objection To Declassification 2009/05/27 : NLN-NSC-665-3-9-5

SOVIET AIRLIFT

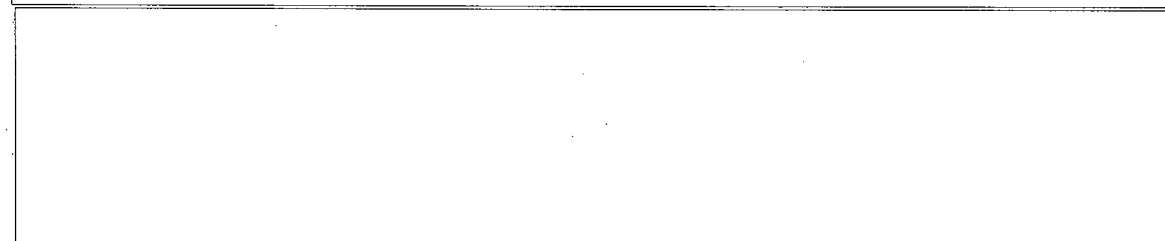
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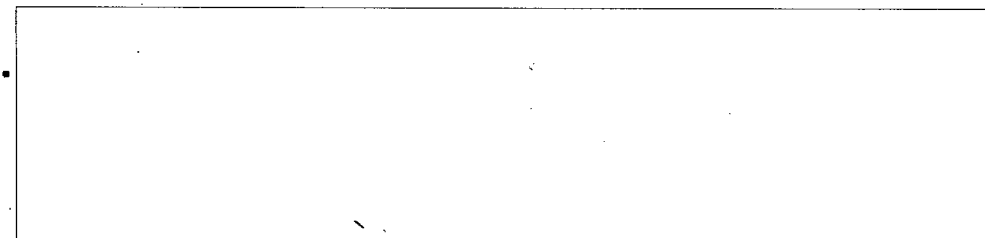


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16. Despite the crowded conditions in the waters south of Crete, where most of the Soviet and US surface ships are concentrated, no incidents between the two naval forces have occurred.

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17. Soviet forces in the Indian and Pacific Oceans have not yet reacted to the entry of the USS Hancock carrier task group into the Indian Ocean. The Hancock is now in the Strait of Malacca.

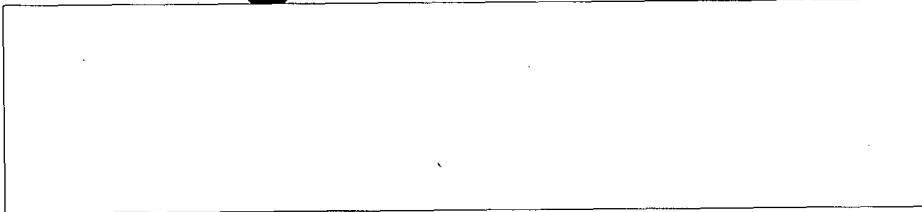
UNITED NATIONS

18. The General Assembly will begin work today on funding the United Nations' Emergency Force. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, a 12-member standing committee, will meet this afternoon to receive Secretary-General Waldheim's cost estimates and consider financing proposals. The Committee's report must eventually be approved by a two-thirds majority of the Assembly.

19. The Secretary-General's current proposal favors the US position that funding should be treated as a regular budgetary expense and proportioned as usual among all UN members. The arrangement seems unlikely, however, to be acceptable to a majority of UN members. The Soviet Union has already indicated that it will not contribute to the expenses of UNEF. France, which along with the USSR provoked a financial crisis by refusing to pay its assessment for the Congo emergency operations, has not yet taken a clear position. Various states are expected to argue that the US should assume a larger share of the expenses than the 25 percent of the UN budget prescribed by this year's assessment scale. Developing states are also likely to request a reduced assessment scale for UNEF expenses. The 1956-67 UNEF and Congo precedents-- where the regular scale was modified along these lines-- are certain to be cited. There may also be pressure for an entirely separate account for UNEF.

20. A clash over funding--which has been a problem for past UN peacekeeping operations--could weaken non-aligned support for Waldheim's UNEF plans and raise other points of controversy. A fight over financing would clearly delay the deployment of troops. The 585 peacekeeping troops now in the Middle East

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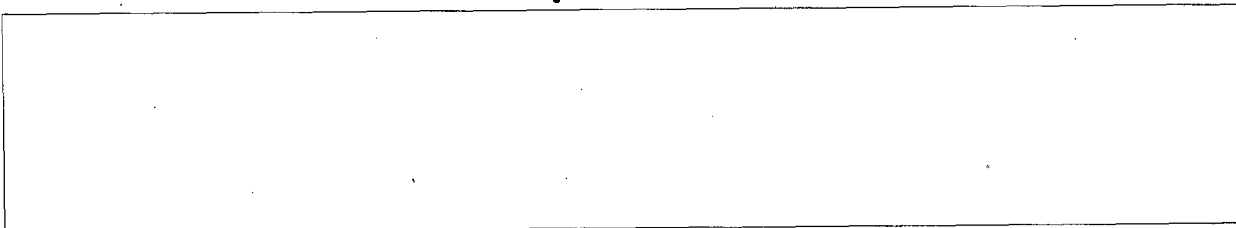
are being funded under UN Cyprus peacekeeping finances. Although Waldheim is authorized to borrow more troops from Cyprus--and may request today that the Irish contingent on Cyprus be transferred--Archbishop Makarios is already protesting the weakening of UNFICYP.

21. Secretary-General Waldheim is also running into difficulties in his negotiations to assemble a 7,000-man international army. Although numerous states have offered troops, many potential contributors are politically unacceptable to the major parties. The tentative agreement that neither Warsaw pact nor NATO members will contribute to UNEF disqualifies some of the major sources such as Canada and the Nordic countries which maintain forces earmarked for UN use. Many African states cannot contribute because they have broken relations with Tel Aviv; Kenya may be the only African state capable of making a major contribution. With so many larger countries and past participants in UN emergency forces banned, forces are likely to come in smaller units and only after extensive preparation periods. Panama, for example, has agreed to send troops but can supply less than half of the normal 500-man contribution. Other likely contributors are Indonesia, Argentina, and Ecuador.

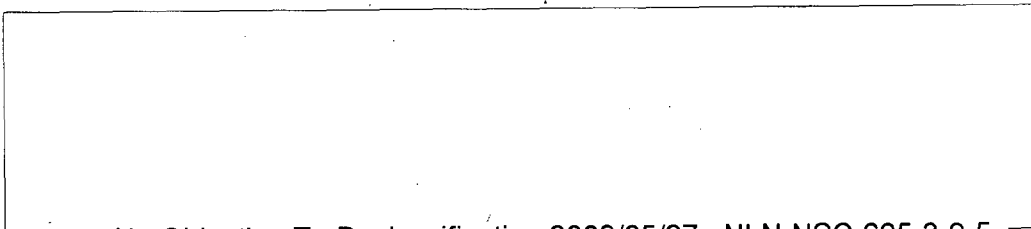
ARAB LEAGUE CONFERENCE

22. The Egyptian press reports that twelve Arab states have agreed to a Moroccan proposal for a meeting of Arab foreign and defense ministers to establish a common position on Middle East issues. The date and venue for the proposed conference will be set by the permanent representatives to the Arab League during their session tomorrow.

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be established, the Arab states will be more conciliatory on such issues as the recognition of Israel and transit of the Suez Canal.

PALESTINIAN POST-WAR AIMS

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25. Fatah and Saiga leaders have as a result indicated that they would be satisfied with a Palestine state located in the territory taken from Jordan during the 1967 war. These fedayeen leaders remain totally opposed, however, to a similar plan advanced earlier by King Husayn for a federal kingdom of Jordan and Palestine, fearing a reinstatement of Jordanian persecutions. They argue that since the fedayeen participated more actively in the recent fighting than the Jordan army, the Jordanian West Bank and Gaza should be handed over to the fedayeen rather than to Jordan. Fedayeen leaders are negotiating with the Syrians and Egyptians to gain support for this position and plan to argue the same line in any ensuing peace conference.

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27. Meanwhile, Fatah and Saiga troops have returned from South Lebanon to the fedayeen camps in the Beirut

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area, and senior Saiga and Fatah officials have stated that until the peace conference their members will refrain from any operations inside Lebanon.

SAUDI ARABIA

28. In an interview today with the US Ambassador, Saudi Minister of State Omar Saqqaf emphasized his government's solidarity with fellow Arab states. While the Saudis had given evidence of this solidarity with other Arabs during cutoffs of oil in 1956 and 1967, Saqqaf pointed to an increased readiness by his country now to use oil as a political instrument to advance the general Arab cause. The minister singled out the heightened sense of responsibility to the cause felt by everyone from the King on down and their awareness that Arab military achievements were not great enough to assure a strong bargaining position as the crucial factors that led to Saudi Arabia's strict oil embargo.

29. Before good relations with the US can be restored, Saqqaf stated, Israel must withdraw to the 1967 boundaries, and for the Saudis the disposition of Jerusalem will be all-important. No mention was made of the Palestinians, indicating that this subject is not of top priority for Saudi leaders. In the meantime, Saudi Arabia will continue to provide Egypt, Jordan and Syria with assistance and Saudi troops will remain in Syria "as long as Syria wants them."

EGYPT

30. The US Interests Section in Cairo has observed that today's Egyptian newspapers are attempting to impress upon the Egyptian public that there has been, as summed up in one Cairo newspaper headline, a "major change in American Middle East strategy." The three major dailies have all focused on differences arising between Israel and the US over withdrawal to the 22 October cease-fire lines, and US pressures on Israel to permit the UN relief caravan to reach the stranded Egyptian Third Army.

31. The Interests Section views this more favorable press treatment of the US as an attempt to offset possible opposition to the decision to enter peace negotiations by illustrating that the US is not altogether biased, despite its commitment to Israel. In this respect it is noteworthy that there was virtually no criticism of US support for Israel in today's news columns and editorials.

32. Press reports are pointing to the short-range effectiveness of oil in pressuring the US to change its Middle East policy either out of considerations of its own interests or those of its European allies.

ASAD SPEECH

33. During a brief speech today, President Asad tried to restore the appearance of unity with Egypt and the Soviet Union by explaining Syria's delay in accepting the first cease-fire. The Syrian leader pointedly admitted that the cease-fire had come as a complete surprise to him, and he told his audience that he had accepted the resolution only after receiving assurances from President Sadat and guarantees from the Soviet Union that Israel would be forced to withdraw from all of the occupied territories. In a muted but nevertheless threatening tone, Asad warned that he would resume the confrontation with Israel if he detected any deception in the implementation of the cease-fire.

34. Asad also made several very indirect references to problems at home and the absolute necessity of maintaining a united internal front. He warned that only a split in Syrian ranks could endanger the country's diplomatic and military gains. (This item is drawn from preliminary excerpts only, not from the full text of the speech.)

SOVIET PRESS

35. The US Embassy in Moscow reports that a TASS item today cites Western news reports which suggest

that the US military alert resulted from the need to divert attention from American domestic troubles. The report, which also was printed in Pravda, appears to be part of a Soviet press campaign that is designed to absolve Moscow of contributing to Middle East tensions. The differences between the US and its European allies over Middle East policy, with special emphasis on the oil issue, is another theme that is receiving considerable attention in the Soviet media.

ROMANIAN CONCERN

36. The Romanian military attache in Moscow has expressed his anxieties to his US counterpart that the Soviets may yet intervene in the Middle East. He believes that latest Arab defeat has further impaired Soviet-Egyptian relations and he is apprehensive that Moscow will do something "significant" to preserve its influence in the Middle East. Any stirrings within the Soviet military machinery have always created some concern in Bucharest for Romania's own security. The attache's remarks seem to stem more from a reflection of that concern than from evidence of Soviet intentions.

AFRICA

38. President Bongo of Gabon notified the American Ambassador this morning that his government is going to break diplomatic relations with Israel.

LATE ITEMSITUATION IN SUEZ CITY

39. A senior UN observer reported that a supply column of 24 trucks reached Suez City and were unloaded about noon today. The observer believes that the 24 trucks constitute the only convoy to enter Suez and knows nothing about a 100-truck convoy. According to him, an Israeli general acting as liaison with the UN forces had provided clearance for the convoy, but Israeli commanders on the scene delayed the operation, which took 34 hours to complete.

40. The UN observer reported considerable firing around Suez City, which he confirmed is still in Egyptian hands. Israeli forces almost surround the city, but Egyptian forces control a strip of land extending about 13 miles north along the canal, he said. The Egyptian governor of Suez had said the city had water for about 36 hours; he claimed the Israelis had rendered the Sweetwater Canal unusable. The observer said he believed the Israelis could capture the city any time they cared to make the effort, given the weakness of the Egyptian forces there. About 250 UNEF Finnish troops in Suez are patrolling the city and a narrow strip along the canal.