

ARAB STATES - ISRAEL: Military activity slacked off yesterday, with only minor cease-fire violations reported. Diplomatic activity intensified, however, primarily in response to reports that both Egypt and Israel had accepted a US-backed peace plan.

On the Egyptian front there were only minor exchanges of small arms and artillery fire yesterday, although the Israelis continue to report minor Egyptian initiatives that Tel Aviv interprets as possible indicators of an Egyptian intention to resume hostilities. A senior Israeli defense official claimed that the Egyptian Second Army on the east bank of the canal was removing mines in front of its positions and that camouflage nets were being removed from tanks. In addition, the official claimed that Cairo was moving armored units closer to both the northern and southern sectors of the Israeli salient on the west bank. An Egyptian military spokesman, meanwhile, charged that the Israelis were committing daily violations of the cease-fire; he complained that on Wednesday they had prevented Red Cross representatives from reaching Suez City.

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Damascus claimed to have downed one Phantom.

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Tel Aviv denies that it lost any planes. This is the third alleged incident in as many days on the Syrian front, which had been generally quiet from 24 October until last weekend. On the Syrian front, as on the Egyptian, the two sides are continuing their minor jockeying for favorable positions to guard against the possibility that hostilities might resume.

Both Egypt and Israel reportedly have accepted a US-backed plan to implement more fully the UN cease-fire proposals and to proceed toward opening direct peace negotiations. Although no official announcements of the details of the plan have yet been made, the Israeli state radio announced yesterday

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that the five-point agreement calls for: a prisoner of war exchange; a UN-supervised supply corridor to the encircled Egyptian Third Army; a lifting of the Egyptian blockade of the Bab al-Mandab Strait; negotiations between Egyptian and Israeli military commanders to arrange "more convenient" cease-fire lines; and direct peace negotiations upon fulfillment of the above steps. Israeli newspapers report that the plan also calls for an eventual withdrawal of Israeli troops "from Egypt" and the Suez Canal, and for Cairo to withdraw from the east bank of the Canal. No Israeli official has commented directly on the peace plan, although Defense Minister Dayan yesterday alluded to it when he said Israel was "perhaps for the first time at the opening of a true peace settlement" with the Arabs.

Egyptian media have eschewed direct comment on the agreement except to deny Israeli and Western press reports that Cairo has pledged to lift its blockade of Bab al-Mandab. Referring to the blockade, Cairo's authoritative Middle East News Agency insisted that Tel Aviv pledge to implement the peace plan "without change and without resorting to prevarications and distortions." The semiofficial Cairo daily Al Ahram hinted, however, that the blockade's status was in fact involved in the preparations for an eventual Arab-Israeli peace conference. In a move that could signal differing Egyptian and Israeli interpretations of what the agreement entails, a spokesman for Egypt's Foreign Ministry yesterday again insisted that Israeli withdrawal to the 22 October cease-fire lines remains a prerequisite to progress toward peace. Unofficial Israeli interpretations of the agreement suggest no Israeli obligation to withdraw to the 22 October positions.

Both Cairo and Tel Aviv are taking steps to explain their positions to their allies. Israeli Prime Minister Meir hopes to repair Israel's relations with several European states this weekend in London, where she will attend a meeting of European Socialist leaders called at her request. Foreign Minister Eban is expected to consult with US and UN officials in New

9 Nov 73

Central Intelligence Bulletin

2

York early next week. A personal emissary of Egyptian President Sadat yesterday made quick calls on Syrian President Asad and Saudi King Faysal and is scheduled to make additional stops in Kuwait, Libya, and Algeria.

Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasir Arafat arrived in Baghdad yesterday, almost certainly to solicit continued Iraqi support for the fedayeen should they--despite Baghdad's disapproval--decide to participate in a future peace conference. Arafat may also appeal for help in quieting the vehement criticisms of the moderate Palestinian leadership by spokesmen of the two small but vocal fedayeen organizations that receive important Iraqi support, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Arab Liberation Front. Rumors continue to circulate, and are now being repeated by the Soviets, that Arafat will soon extend his travels to Moscow, where he would endeavor to firm up Soviet support for the Palestinians in any future peace conference. The issue of Palestinian representation at such a conference is far from resolved, both because the fedayeen remain divided among themselves and because Israel continues to be opposed to their presence in any negotiations. Prime Minister Meir on 7 November reaffirmed this opposition and suggested to the US Ambassador in Tel Aviv that the Palestinians might adequately be included in a Jordanian delegation. The Lebanese, meanwhile, reportedly are eager to ensure a seat for themselves at any future conference in order to push for a Palestinian state that could absorb Lebanon's sizable Palestinian refugee and terrorist populations.

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9 Nov 73

Central Intelligence Bulletin

3

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The United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) is encountering additional difficulties. A UN Secretariat official has complained that Israel is placing disabling restrictions on UNEF and that a complaint might have to be lodged with the Security Council. The most serious problem stems from Israel's refusal to permit UNEF contingents from states that have severed diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv to serve in Israeli-held territory. Three such states are now on the force and more may be added. Further adding to UNEF's problems was official French refusal yesterday to provide airlift and other logistic support. The French decision, reflecting Paris' pique over the Security Council's decision to bar its permanent members from serving on the UNEF, will increase concern that the Soviets will dominate the airlift. Moscow already has assumed responsibility for transporting Finnish, Swedish, and Austrian UNEF contingents to the Middle East.

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9 Nov 73

Central Intelligence Bulletin

4