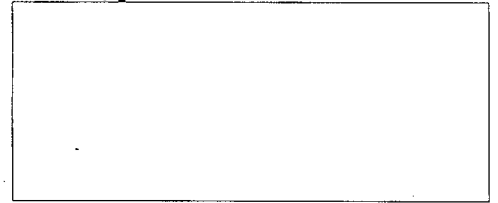


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ARAB STATES - ISRAEL: Efforts to reopen the Egyptian-Israeli talks continued over the weekend, while at the same time UN sources reported signs around Ismailia of possible Egyptian preparations for renewed attacks. Cease-fire violations, however, dropped over the last two days and, with one exception on the Syrian front, were generally minor.

UN observers reported unusually large movements of Egyptian troops and equipment toward the Suez front yesterday. [redacted]

[redacted] In the past week, the Egyptians reportedly have built two ponton bridges across the Suez Canal about three miles north of Ismailia and two bridges over the sweetwater canal west of the city. [redacted]

[redacted] Attempts to contact the senior Egyptian liaison officer yesterday were thwarted when UN officials were told he was attending a large, hastily convened meeting in Ismailia.

Cairo newspapers continue to stress Egypt's ability and will to fight if Israel persists in "violating" international agreements, particularly the six-point cease-fire accord. The semi-official paper Al Ahram warned that "Israel is mistaken to think that there is an alternative to the resumption of fighting in order to implement all provisions of the cease-fire arrangements." Other papers warned of renewed fighting if Israel continues on the same path.

UNEF Commander Siilasvuo met late yesterday in Cairo with Egyptian Minister of War Ismail after conferring earlier in the day with Israeli Defense Minister Dayan in Jerusalem to explore ways to reopen the disengagement talks broken off on 29 November. Following the Jerusalem meeting, which Siilasvuo termed "useful," Dayan issued a statement expressing

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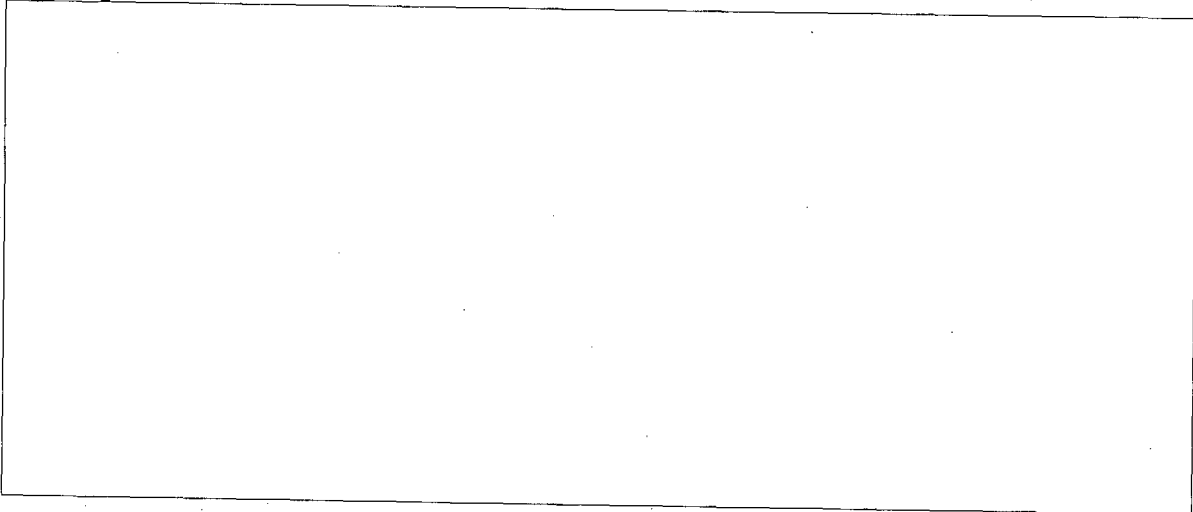
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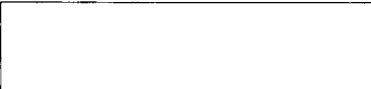
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Israel's willingness to resume talks whenever Egypt is ready. He noted that Israel's negotiator, General Yariv, would be prepared with "instructions from the government and will be able to submit them to the Egyptians." No statement was issued after the Siilasvuo-Ismael talks.

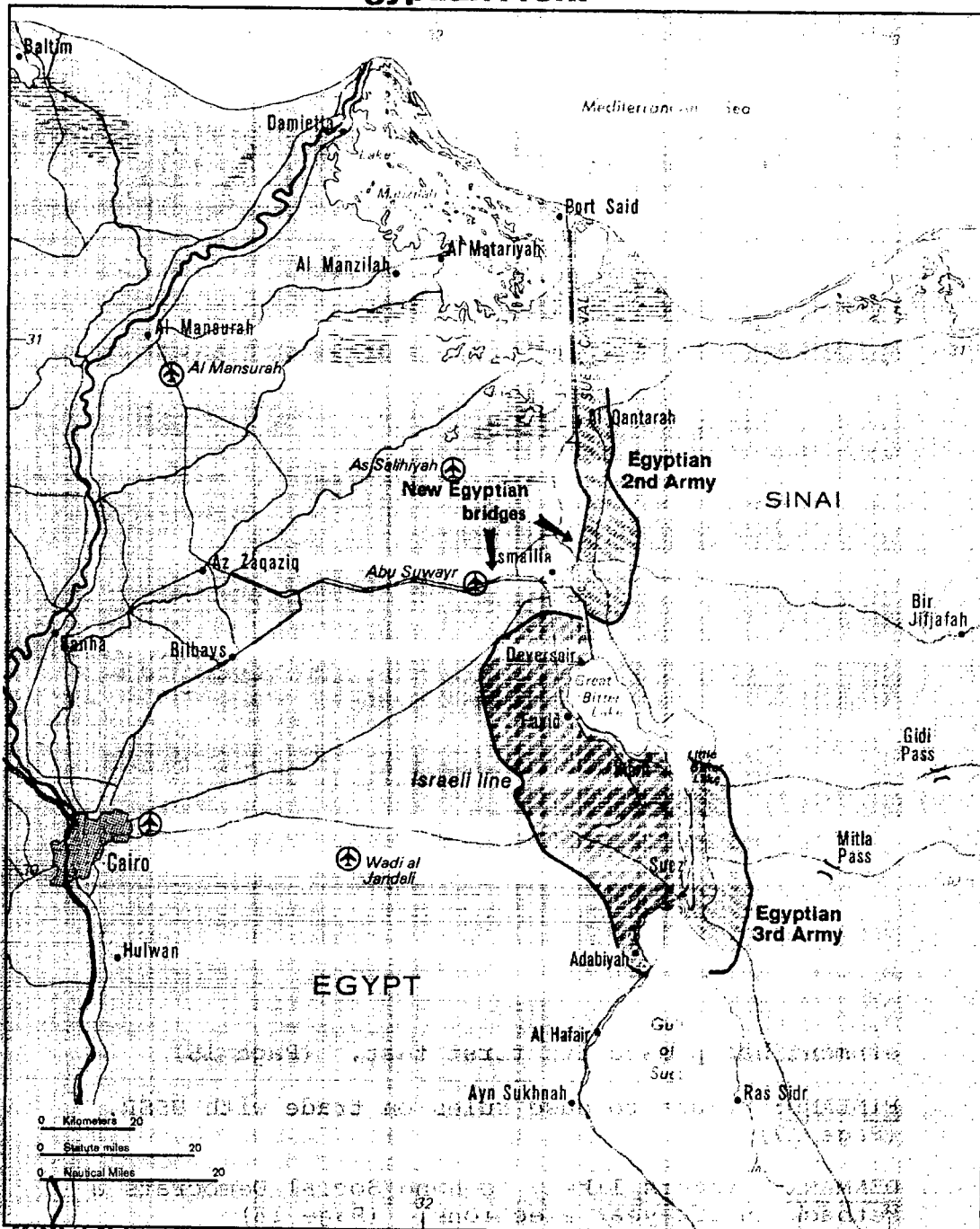
Several cease-fire violations were reported along the Syrian and Egyptian fronts yesterday. In the most serious, Damascus claims to have destroyed an Israeli engineering unit, three tanks, a bulldozer, and an ammunition dump during a three to four-hour battle. The Israelis contend that the clash was sparked when the Syrians fired on a tractor working in an area very near the Israeli forward line. The Syrians reportedly employed small arms, artillery, and tank fire, as well as anti-tank missiles. An Israeli spokesman said that two Israeli soldiers were wounded, but they neither confirmed nor denied the Syrian claims. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Several probably related clashes occurred between Israeli and fedayeen forces along the Lebanese border over the weekend, touched off by fedayeen shelling of an Israeli settlement and a military position.





Egyptian Front



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JORDAN: Prospects for Jordan's participation in a Middle East peace conference have brightened as a result of King Husayn's temporizing request for a "clarification" of the Palestinian representation issue.

The King's expectations of representing West Bank residents as citizens of Jordan at the Geneva peace conference suffered a setback early in the week when the Arab summit conference in Algiers ignored his warning and designated the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole international bargaining agent for Palestinian interests. This decision activated Husayn's threat to boycott the peace conference, as he had the summit proceedings, but his position has now been modified.

In a speech to Jordan's National Assembly on 1 December, Husayn:

--laid primary emphasis on his standing requirement that any Arab-Israeli settlement be a comprehensive one jointly and simultaneously agreed to by all nations concerned, and include Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories; he ruled out "withdrawal from any part," such as the Sinai, "at the expense of any other part," such as the West Bank of the Jordan.

--reiterated his willingness to allow self-determination by West Bank residents "after we perform our duty of liberating the West Bank and Jerusalem" and other Arab lands. To this end, he formally proposed a UN-administered referendum and pledged that whatever the outcome-- a unified Jordan, a confederation, or separate states--"we shall be their noble brothers."

--withheld his decision on attending a Geneva conference, pending clarification from "brotherly Arab quarters" of his own responsibilities for the restoration of Palestinian lands and rights. Although he promised to "shoulder our responsibilities...in every international arena,"

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he would not "compete with anybody" if Jordan were excluded from representing Palestinian interests.

Husayn's statements can be read as an appeal to Egyptian President Sadat for reassurance that no separate deals will be made with Israel at Jordan's expense and for some solution of the Palestinian representation issue that would permit Jordan's acceptance of a peace conference seat.

The US Embassy in Amman believes Husayn will do his utmost to strike a direct bargain with the PLO that will allow him to go to Geneva. A prominent West Bank politician assured an embassy officer shortly after Husayn made his speech that talks with the PLO were already under way and were likely to succeed. [REDACTED]

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~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]

USSR - MIDDLE EAST: Moscow is displaying heightened concern over the Middle East situation, but appears to expect the current cease-fire to hold.

Pravda launched its toughest attack on Israel in several weeks last Friday, accusing Tel Aviv of trying to pursue its pre-October course and of placing every possible obstacle in the way of a political settlement. The following day, Moscow radio gave its tacit approval to Cairo's decision to break off the talks at Kilometer 101 and warned of a sharp increase in tensions caused by Israeli activity. A Soviet official in Cairo, however, has expressed no special concern over the breakdown of the talks and has acknowledged that Soviet dependents are returning to Egypt. [REDACTED]

What is especially nettlesome to the USSR at this juncture is the budding US-Egyptian relationship. Soviet officials in Cairo have questioned both US visitors and the Egyptian Foreign Ministry about relations between Cairo and Washington.

In response to the Soviet demarches, and in an apparent effort to ensure that Egypt's major source of military equipment is not cut off at this critical juncture, the Egyptians are demonstrating overt gratitude and affection for the USSR. In Friday's Al Ahram, for example, influential editor Haykal termed the Soviet-Egyptian relationship "vital and irreplaceable for Arab peace." He wrote that relations with the US should not be permitted to diminish the Soviet role. [REDACTED]

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FOR THE RECORD*

Libya-Egypt: Libya has closed its diplomatic office in Cairo and recalled its personnel. The decision was apparently taken several days ago, but was not noted in the Cairo press until yesterday. There has been no indication that Egyptian diplomats have been asked to leave or are being withdrawn from Tripoli. In what may be an effort at mediation, Syrian President Asad, according to press reports, has dispatched a cabinet minister to Tripoli with a message to President Qadhafi "dealing with safeguarding unity in Arab ranks." [REDACTED]

Romania: After an overnight stop at Algiers, Romanian President Ceausescu will arrive in the US today to begin a state visit. Ceausescu reportedly invited himself to Algeria at the last minute to explain why Romania refused the Arabs' request to break relations with Israel. Ceausescu's emissaries received a "cool" reception during their recent tour of Arab capitals. [REDACTED]

**These items were prepared by CIA without consultation with the Departments of State and Defense.*

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