

ARAB STATES - ISRAEL: The Egyptian-Israeli military disengagement talks are expected to get under way today or tomorrow in Geneva.

Cairo underscored the importance it attaches to the talks and the care with which it is making its own preparations for them by keeping Foreign Minister Fahmi in Geneva--the only foreign minister to remain after last week's opening session of the Geneva peace conference. Fahmi, who held a series of discussions during the past few days with US, Soviet, and UN representatives to the conference and conducted several working sessions with the Egyptian delegation, reportedly will return to Cairo today. According to press reports, Egyptian Brigadier General Magdub will remain behind to head Egypt's delegation.

Israel's delegation chief, Major General Gur, will arrive in Geneva today from Tel Aviv after conferring with Prime Minister Meir, Deputy Prime Minister Alon, Foreign Minister Eban, and Defense Minister Dayan. Dayan yesterday told Israeli newspaper editors that the chances are better than even that a separation of forces can be arranged at Geneva.

According to press accounts, Prime Minister Rifai said upon his return to Amman from Geneva over the weekend that a Jordanian delegation will go back to Geneva in January to hold disengagement talks with Israel concurrent with those between Tel Aviv and Cairo.

The Soviets, meanwhile, reportedly told a member of the Israeli parliament who was in Geneva last week that Syria is prepared to submit a list of its Israeli POWs once Israel withdraws to the October 22 cease-fire lines. Damascus would be prepared to return wounded Israeli POWs when Israel withdraws to the lines existing prior to October 6, and the remaining POWs when Israel withdraws to its pre-1967 borders. This same Israeli MP reportedly was told by members of the Egyptian delegation that Syria holds a total of 28 POWs.

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Numerous incidents were reported along the Suez front over the past two days, with Tel Aviv reportedly lodging 45 complaints with the UN Emergency Force over Egyptian cease-fire violations. An Israeli military spokesman reported that the Syrian front, however, was quiet yesterday for the eighth consecutive day.

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FOR THE RECORD*

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International Oil: Arab oil ministers decided yesterday to ease their oil embargo by increasing production 10 percent in January, instead of cutting it an additional 5 percent as previously planned. The embargo against the US and Holland, however, will not be lifted at this time, according to Saudi Oil Minister Yamani. [REDACTED]

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Middle East - Africa - Vatican: Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia and President Numayri of Sudan, accompanied by Liberia's vice president and Zambia's foreign minister, held a lengthy meeting with Pope Paul on December 22, primarily to discuss the future status of Jerusalem. The African leaders--an Orthodox Christian, a Muslim, a Protestant, and a Catholic--later also met with Italian President Leone, according to press accounts. [REDACTED]

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Turkey: After trying unsuccessfully for ten days to form a national coalition government, caretaker Prime Minister Naim Talu yesterday asked President Koruturk to allow him to give up his efforts. Talu told journalists after his meeting with Koruturk that the President would take additional political soundings before making a decision, possibly by tomorrow, on the request. [REDACTED]

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