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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Saturday 12 November 1977

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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Saturday, 12 November 1977.

The NID Cable is for the purpose of informing senior US officials.

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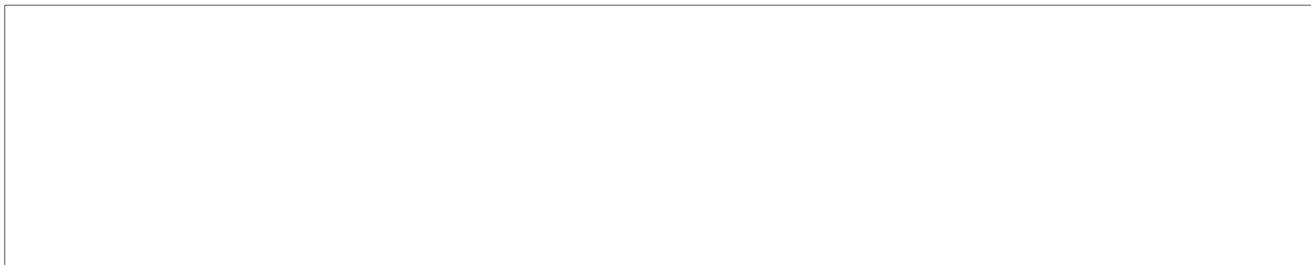
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ISRAEL: Begin's Speech to Egypt


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 *Israeli Prime Minister Begin's radiobroadcast to Egypt yesterday was almost certainly an attempt to wrest the propaganda initiative from President Sadat and demonstrate that Israel is no less interested than Egypt in peace. Egypt has characterized Begin's broadcast as "unsuccessful" because his remarks were confined to Egypt.*



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 Begin welcomed the readiness Sadat had rhetorically professed in his speech on Wednesday to address the Israeli parliament and offered to go to Cairo to address the Egyptian legislature. Appealing to the Egyptians to revive their ancient, biblical friendship with Israel, Begin suggested that the two sides take a "silent oath" not to shed any more blood.

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 The Israelis have been impressed by what they regard as the latest in a long series of clever public relations gambits by Sadat. Begin himself had frequently criticized the previous Israeli Government for remaining on the defensive in responding to Sadat's public overtures for peace, and he doubtless was determined not to let that happen this time. By offering the hand of peace to Egypt, Begin also seemed to be trying to aggravate differences over peace negotiations between Egypt and Syria and to stoke Syrian fears of a separate Egyptian-Israeli deal.

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 An official Egyptian Government spokesman said yesterday, in fact, that Begin may have been trying to drive a wedge between Egypt and other Arab states. He reiterated Sadat's remarks that any serious call for peace must address the restoration of Palestinian rights and Israeli withdrawal from Arab territories occupied in 1967. 

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ISRAEL-LEBANON: Situation Report

25X1 [redacted] *The Israeli-Lebanese border quieted following the Palestinian shelling yesterday morning of the Israeli town of Yiron and Israel's subsequent shelling of the Bint Jubayl area in Lebanon.*

USSR: Supreme Commander Brezhnev

25X1 [redacted] *Soviet President and Communist Party chief Brezhnev has been publicly identified for the first time as Supreme Commander in Chief of the Soviet Armed Forces.*

25X1 [redacted] *The identification came in an article in the Defense Ministry monthly *Voyenny Vestnik* by Colonel General Sredin who, as first deputy chief of the armed forces' political administration, is clearly in a position to know about this subject. In asserting that Brezhnev's speeches have made a major contribution to Soviet military thinking, Sredin noted that Brezhnev is General Secretary of the Communist Party, Chairman of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, Supreme Commander in Chief of the Soviet Armed Forces, and a Marshal of the Soviet Union.*

25X1 [redacted] *We have long known that Brezhnev would become the Supreme Commander in Chief in the event of war and would then have authority to issue direct orders to the Soviet armed forces. //The evidence available, however, had suggested that he would have such authority only in the event of war or an attack upon the USSR and that in peacetime he would issue such orders only with the concurrence of the other members of the Politburo--and even then would act through the Minister of Defense.//*

25X1 [redacted] The decision to identify Brezhnev as Supreme Commander in Chief may be a sign that the situation has changed and that he now has the authority during peacetime to direct the armed forces himself, rather than through Defense Minister Ustinov. In any event, it clearly enhances his public standing on defense matters both within the USSR and abroad. It could also strengthen his hand both in dealing with any objections by the military to compromises on SALT or other arms control negotiations and in any talks with President Carter on such issues.

25X1 [redacted] In this respect, the move is fully in keeping with previous steps that have been taken to enhance Brezhnev's public stature in defense matters. In the past few years he has been given publicity for his efforts as a political officer at the front during World War II, identified as Chairman of the Defense Council, promoted to Marshal of the Soviet Union, and awarded military honors on his 70th birthday last year. [redacted]

ETHIOPIA: Security Situation

25X1 [redacted] *The security situation in Addis Ababa is deteriorating rapidly, apparently because of a power struggle among underground and semi-official leftist groups. These groups are jockeying for leadership of what they see as the next phase of the Ethiopian revolution. New charges are being levied that the Mengistu regime has relaxed its revolutionary fervor. There is heightened nervousness at all levels, and governmental reprisals are beginning to increase.*

25X1 [redacted] If the insecurity in Addis Ababa continues even on the present level, public morale will suffer, as could government efforts to mobilize support for the war effort in the Ogaden and Eritrea. Unchecked escalation of the violence or, alternatively, the use of brutal repressive measures could also threaten the cohesion of the ruling military council.

25X1 [redacted] So many people have weapons that it is difficult to fix responsibilities for shootings, although the government charges that the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party is behind much of the violence. The EPRP, an underground extremist organization dedicated to the imposition of civilian revolutionary rule, opposes the ruling military council and the political

25X1 [redacted]

institutions it has created. Local leaders of these organizations are its main targets for assassination, although several higher ranking officials, including a leading member of the ruling military council, have been killed during the past 10 days.

25X1 [redacted] The EPRP's supporters are mainly students, teachers, and trade unionists. After several major government efforts to suppress the party, we no longer know its size or leadership, but its financial support still appears to be channeled through Ethiopian student associations abroad, notably in the US.

25X1 [redacted] The current buildup of tension dates from August, when Chairman Mengistu called for a general mobilization of the Ethiopian masses to meet the military threat from Somalia. Mengistu also shifted the regime's political rhetoric by omitting appeals to Marxism and stressing more traditional patriotic themes. This was reinforced by the decree establishing the National Revolutionary Operations Command, which emphasized cooperation between military authorities and local civilian organizations and further diminished the role assigned to Marxist civilian advisers.

25X1 [redacted] The conversion to a full war footing in mid-September and the appointment of technically skilled personnel to key positions were seen by the leftists as confirmation that the regime was no longer giving priority to revolutionary purity.

25X1 [redacted] Several mass organizations are now advocating harsh measures against "counterrevolutionary terrorists." The All-Ethiopian Trade Union--which has lost two successive chairmen to assassination--has taken the lead in calling for renewed city-wide operations to weed out enemies of the revolution. The last such operation, in March, left hundreds of dead, mostly students.

25X1 [redacted] The government remains wary of repeating excesses committed during the March search and destroy operations. Its patience appears to be wearing thin, however. Several students were killed in late October when police fired on a group of antigovernment demonstrators, and two more students were shot a few days later for refusing to produce identity cards. Eight alleged members of the EPRP were recently executed after a court martial. The government-controlled media have published accusations of subversive meddling by Western countries to undermine the Mengistu government. [redacted]

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MOROCCO-ALGERIA: Tensions Continue

25X1 [] Morocco's King Hassan told newsmen yesterday that his recent threat to have his forces pursue Polisario Front guerrillas from Western Sahara into Algeria also applies to the guerrillas' violations of Mauritania's frontiers. He added a conciliatory note, however, professing a preference for a dialogue and welcoming any constructive mediation effort. The Algerians have moved to increase their military capabilities near the Moroccan border.

25X1 [] Hassan again charged that Algerian regulars were fighting with the guerrillas and placed the onus entirely on Algeria for current tensions and any hostilities that might ensue. He repeatedly accused Algeria's President Boumediene of duplicity and of rejecting several Moroccan offers for a settlement.

25X1 [] The King seemed to rule out once and for all any future consultation with the Saharan people; such consultation has long been demanded by Algeria. His conditions for a dialogue with the Algerians--cessation of the guerrilla war and acceptance of Moroccan sovereignty in Western Sahara--remain unchanged.

25X1 [] Egyptian Vice President Mubarak meanwhile held talks with Moroccan officials yesterday in another effort to mediate the Sahara dispute. He is scheduled to confer with Boumediene today and then go on to Mauritania. In his conversations, Mubarak is likely to concentrate on getting all parties to agree to avoid direct military hostilities; neither side is yet disposed to negotiate seriously to resolve the dispute.

25X1 [] Hassan's warnings to Algiers suggest that he will dispatch irregular commandos to raid guerrilla sanctuaries in the Tindouf region of Algeria if the recent increased guerrilla attacks continue. //We believe he will avoid conventional military retaliation. Moroccan forces in the south are mostly stationed away from the Algerian-Moroccan border area and have shown only a limited capability to find or pursue Polisario forces. The Moroccan Air Force is also limited in its ability to support such action.//

25X1 [] Algeria is clearly concerned about Morocco's sabre-rattling and the recent French pressure for the release of French hostages held by the Polisario. The Algerians have sought

[redacted]

to forestall Moroccan or French military intervention with diplomatic demarches to foreign governments. Foreign Minister Bouteflika also sent a note to the president of the UN Security Council on Thursday, laying the groundwork for a possible appeal to the Council in the future.

[redacted]

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UPPER VOLTA: Lamizana's Future

25X1 [redacted] *Upper Volta's Foreign Minister would like the US to encourage President Lamizana to be a candidate for president in a proposed civilian government, rather than retiring next year when Lamizana says his military-based regime will step down. If he runs for election, he is likely to win.*

25X1 [redacted] General Laminana's pro-Western regime has ruled Upper Volta since he overthrew a corrupt civilian government in 1966. As part of its oft-delayed plan for restoring civilian rule, the regime on 1 October lifted its three-year-old ban on politics. It scheduled a referendum on a draft constitution for 27 November and elections for president and a National Assembly next May.

25X1 [redacted] Lamizana has talked of retiring after the elections but has become discouraged by the maneuvering for influence by some of the same Upper Voltans whose misrule led to the military takeover in 1966.

25X1 [redacted] Foreign Minister Kargougou, who probably aspires to be prime minister under Lamizana in a civilian government, recently told the US Ambassador that it could be a disaster should any of the political figures who are beginning to vie for position win the presidency. He said that the squabbling among them would result in chaos, and the military officers who would probably intervene to restore stability might be led by a radical similar to President Kerekou of Benin.

25X1 [redacted] The draft constitution on which Upper Voltans will vote this month would restrict the number of political parties in an effort to limit factionalism. The long preamble is devoted mostly to human rights and basic freedoms, which Lamizana has not seriously curtailed.

[redacted]

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THAILAND-CAMBODIA: Communique

25X1 [] Cambodia has finally broken its long silence on its border problems with Thailand. In a communique issued yesterday, Cambodia agreed to talks by the two countries' ambassadors in Laos and raised Thai hopes that tensions might be reduced.

25X1 [] //The Cambodian Foreign Ministry communique is the first indication of Phnom Penh's willingness to discuss the border problem since Foreign Minister Ieng Sary's visit to Bangkok in October 1975; it refers to the joint communique issued then as the basis for future talks. Recent talks between the Thai and Cambodian foreign ministers at the UN and subsequent contacts in Vientiane may have laid the groundwork for the Cambodian demarche. Chinese counsel to Cambodian Prime Minister Pol Pot during his visit to China last month may also have contributed to Phnom Penh's decision to begin talks.//

25X1 [] The statement included a forceful presentation of Cambodia's case, accusing Thailand of encroaching on Cambodian territory and organizing "traitors" to carry out activities against the Cambodian regime. Conflicting claims over the delineation of the border and the continuing activities of Cambodian resistance groups operating from Thai territory clearly lie behind Cambodian attacks on Thai villages.

25X1 [] Thai hopes that relations might improve after the meeting of the foreign ministers at the UN were dashed in late October and early this month, when Cambodian forces launched widespread attacks against Thai border villages. The attacks may have been designed to increase Cambodian leverage before engaging in talks.

25X1 [] Thailand's interim Foreign Minister, Wong Phonnikon, responded promptly to the Cambodian demarche, calling the communique a good sign and promising to present the matter to the Prime Minister as soon as the new cabinet is formed. In the meantime, the Thai Embassy in Vientiane is being instructed to contact the Cambodian Embassy, presumably to work out arrangements for negotiations. []

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[REDACTED]

INTERNATIONAL: Coffee Price Policy

25X1 [REDACTED] Coffee-producing nations will meet in London on Monday to discuss policies for defending coffee prices. This meeting follows a series of agreements by regional coffee producer groups to coordinate marketing efforts. News of these agreements has pushed the December futures price up more than 40 cents per pound to \$2.00 in the last two weeks.

25X1 [REDACTED] Central American producers agreed in late October to withhold coffee from the market to bolster prices; coffee lately has been selling at about \$1.70 per pound. Last Friday, Brazil and Colombia--the world's largest coffee producers--agreed to coordinate marketing procedures. Mexico, El Salvador, and Ivory Coast also have joined the latter agreement and pledged to hold the minimum price of coffee to \$2.00 per pound. African producers announced on Monday that they would halt sales until prices improve.

25X1 [REDACTED] Unity among coffee producers will probably be effective for only a short time because most of these countries need foreign exchange. Producers in the Dominican Republic already have announced opposition to the Central American agreement. As prices become firm, the temptation to sell coffee will mount. For the longer term, prices will probably decline, reflecting the ample supply of coffee available to meet reduced world demand. [REDACTED]

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BRIEFS

Arab States

25X1 [REDACTED] The Arab foreign ministers' meeting that begins today in Tunis seems primarily intended to achieve greater coordination on Arab-Israeli settlement issues. Among other topics, the participants may discuss Syrian and Egyptian differences over US proposals for reconvening the Geneva peace conference. The Palestinian delegates probably will seek assurances that the Palestine Liberation Organization's interests will be protected during the Middle East negotiation process.

[redacted] Efforts may be made to arrange a meeting of the heads of state of those countries most concerned with the Arab-Israeli problem. Egyptian President Sadat, however, already has signaled that he is lukewarm toward this idea. The deteriorating situation in southern Lebanon may also be examined. [redacted]

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USSR

[redacted] The granting of a six-month exit visa to a leading dissident, former General Petr Grigorenko, and his family to visit the US reflects primarily the continued Soviet tactic of further weakening the dissident community by depriving it of leadership. Grigorenko is the last prominent member of the Helsinki monitoring group who is not under arrest. The move probably is also part of an effort to deflect what Moscow continues to assert is a confrontational US posture on human rights at the Belgrade conference. Finally, the gesture toward Grigorenko could reflect Soviet satisfaction over what they perceive as some improvement in US-Soviet relations.

[redacted] Grigorenko told Western newsmen in Moscow that he intends to return home and would not have accepted the visa without assurances of a return. His poor physical health in recent years, however, has often been accompanied by marked shifts in mood and in his outlook toward the future. He and his family would, in any event, have little recourse but to stay in the West if the Soviets refuse to readmit them. Grigorenko will leave within the next 10 days. [redacted]

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Spain

[redacted] //Spain has canceled a naval exercise and placed on alert ships of its fleet stationed at Rota naval station on the Atlantic.

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[redacted] the alert is in response to growing tension in northwest Africa.//

[redacted] //The action may be part of an effort to show concern for Spanish citizens still in Spain's former colony of Western Sahara and to be prepared for their possible evacuation should it become necessary.

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