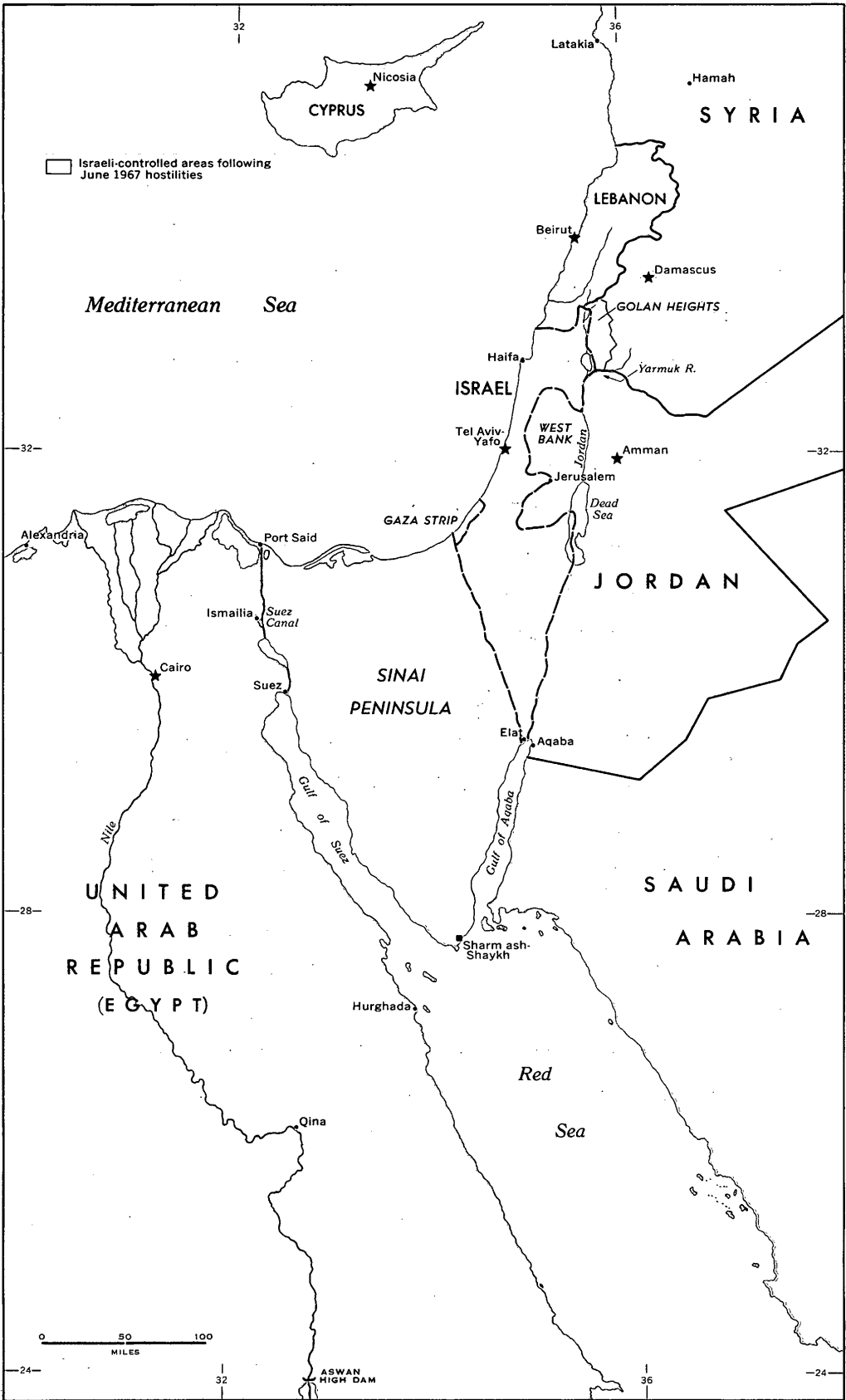




The President's Daily Brief

5 May 1969

~~Top Secret~~ 50X1



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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

MIDDLE EAST

Embassy Beirut has provided further background on President Hilu's decision to take a hard line against the fedayeen. Hilu has told Ambassador Porter that he had no choice but to order the army to do whatever was necessary to control the terrorists and prevent any cross-border operations into Israel. Hilu said there was no other way to halt what he called the "Jordanization" of Lebanon--sharing or ceding power to the fedayeen.

Hilu claimed there were 1,600 fedayeen in southern Lebanon and more waiting on the Syrian side of the border. He said this amounted to a "Syrian-inspired invasion" whose objective was the takeover of all of southern Lebanon.

The army of course is the key to the success in confronting the fedayeen. Even though General Bustani, the army's chief, has agreed to carry out Hilu's policy, a source close to the president told Porter that the basic question was whether Bustani's patriotism will outweigh his desire to advance his presidential ambitions by currying favor with the Muslims.

Whatever the army's staying power over the long pull, Hilu's order already has had some effect. The army is reported to have fired on a group of fedayeen Saturday.

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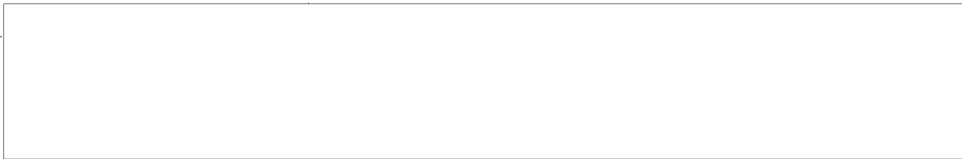


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VIETNAM

Thieu is going to have his hands full trying to whip into line leaders of the major groups he hopes to bring into his new political movement. Although happy enough to pay lip-service to the need for a united front against the Communists, opposition politicians are making it increasingly clear that their primary objective in forthcoming negotiations with Thieu will be to ensure that the interests of their respective groups are fully protected.

These leaders, even though they have not yet agreed on which negotiating tactics to pursue, appear at least to be united on two points at this time; that the "major groups" must be given a position in Thieu's front commensurate with their relative importance, and that Thieu's abrasive political organizer, Nguyen Van Huong, must go. On the first point, the politicians have not yet settled on a particular formula to push, but they are clearly against Thieu's preliminary proposal that all of the political parties be equally represented in a consultative "presidium."

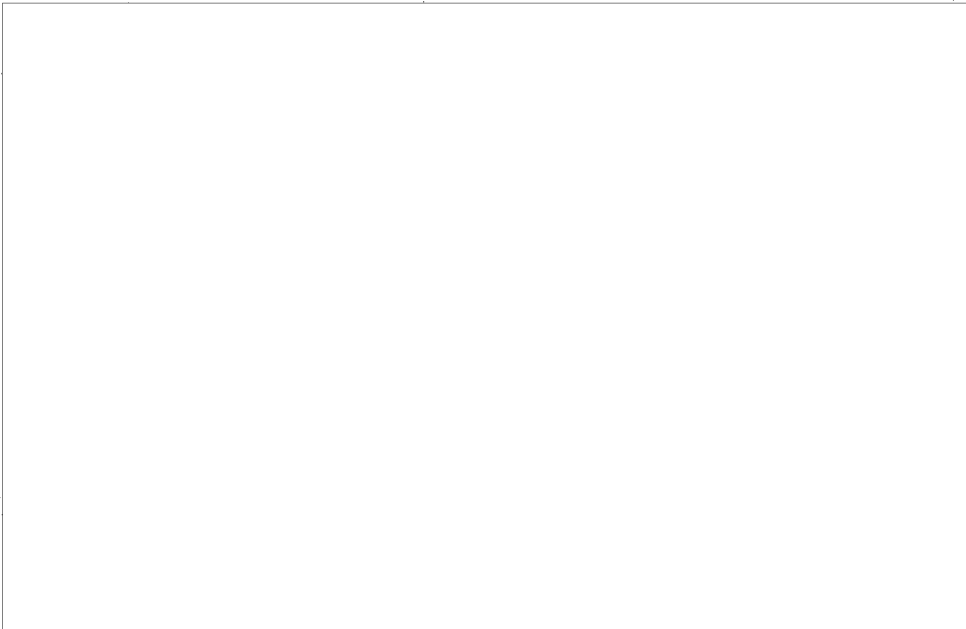


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EUROPE

Francois Mitterand announced yesterday that he was not a candidate for the French presidency. Mitterand's withdrawal came after he had consulted earlier in the day with the French Socialist party, presumably in a final attempt to assess prospects for the development of a united left coalition to back his candidacy. The Socialists early this morning nominated moderate Gaston Defferre to be their candidate after a motion to consult other parties of the left before voting on a candidate was finally defeated.

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SOVIET AFFAIRS

There is nothing significant to report.

II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

LAOS

Government guerrilla forces have moved into the former Pathet Lao base of Xieng Khouangville. In a related operation they have driven the enemy from positions to the east, capturing large amounts of supplies. The ease with which these enemy positions have fallen has led Meo leader Vang Pao to widen his sights. He has committed additional troops in order to hold ground already captured and to press deeper into enemy territory.

Vang Pao may be overextending his thinly-stretched guerrilla troops. There are large numbers of North Vietnamese troops who have not yet been committed to the fighting. One battalion, for example, seems to be moving into a position from which it could threaten Vang Pao's headquarters at Long Tieng. Furthermore, a North Vietnamese radio terminal--possibly serving a reconnaissance unit--has been in the Long Tieng area within the past week.

The Communists also are readying themselves for heavier action north of the Plaine des Jarres.

[redacted] as many as five

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Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese battalions are being moved into position for an all-out assault on two government outposts. [REDACTED] the North Vietnamese hope to take these positions in order to prevent government guerrillas from using them as a base for moving back into Samneua Province during the rainy season.

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BOLIVIA

President Siles' chances for hanging on to his new office now look a little brighter. Army chief Ovando, doubtless influenced by international expressions of support for Siles' constitutional succession, seems to be having thoughts about an immediate bid for power. Ovando and Siles are now negotiating a new cabinet [REDACTED]

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Ovando's course of action will be determined in the final analysis, however, by his judgment of whether he can safely bide his time until the regularly scheduled presidential elections next year, when he would be an almost certain winner.

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