

The President's Daily Brief

16 September 1972



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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

16 September 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

An Israeli armored column entered southern Lebanon this morning in an anti-fedayeen operation. (Page 1)

Moscow, anxious to recoup its position in the Middle East, has offered to conclude a "defense agreement" with Lebanon. (Page 2)

South Vietnamese Marines appear to have gained control of the citadel in Quang Tri City. (Page 3)

In Chile [redacted] (Page 4)

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Croatian extremists still control the hijacked Swedish jet. (Page 5)

Negotiations between India and Pakistan remain stalemated. (Page 6)

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[redacted]

[redacted] Soviet [redacted] Cuba [redacted] (Page 7)

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ISRAEL-LEBANON

An Israeli armored force entered southern Lebanon early this morning in what an Israeli spokesman described as a "combing" operation for fedayeen. The Israeli force included tanks, and half-tracks, and was supported by aircraft. The spokesman said they were searching for 100 Saiga terrorists reported to be in the area. He would not indicate when the Israeli force planned to withdraw. There have been some exchanges between the Lebanese Army and the Israeli force, but the extent of this is not known.

The operation centered in the Bint-Jbeil area of south-central Lebanon, some five miles inside the border. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Israeli aircraft bombed Fatah-Saiga headquarters in Nabatie, some 25 miles inside Lebanon. The US Embassy in Beirut has reported that the Israelis were blowing up houses in their operation.

The Israeli action follows a clash with Lebanese-based fedayeen near Mount Hermon in southeastern Lebanon on Thursday in which two Israeli soldiers were killed. The fedayeen said the Israelis were also bombing in this area.

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USSR-LEBANON

Moscow has offered to conclude a "defense agreement" with Lebanon and to "dispatch the Soviet fleet to Beirut," in order to counter the recent Israeli "aggression." Lebanese Foreign Minister Abouhamad informed Ambassador Buffum about the offer yesterday, adding that it was made by Soviet Ambassador Azimov during a meeting with President Franjyah on Wednesday. Abouhamad refused to discuss the details of the offer, but did state that he thought that it would serve primarily as a symbol of the Soviet interest in Lebanon.

Moscow's offer is a fresh demonstration of its continuing effort to recoup its position in the Middle East. The talk of a formal "defense agreement" and of "dispatching the Soviet fleet," however, may well be an overstatement of Soviet intentions.

Ambassador Buffum doubts--and so do we--that Beirut will accept any major Soviet tie. The Lebanese traditionally have been cautious of the Soviets and are keenly aware of how Egypt's close ties with Moscow went sour.

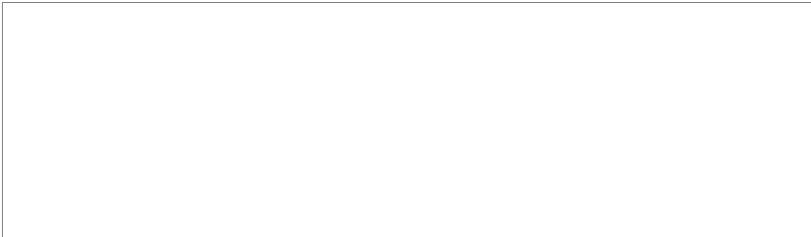
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VIETNAM

South Vietnamese Marines appear to have gained control of the citadel in Quang Tri City. At least two Marine battalions are inside the citadel, and an enemy command post for defense of the fortress has been overrun. Fighting outside the citadel was less intense, although the Communists have continued their artillery attacks against Marine and Ranger positions in the city's southern and northern sectors. If the South Vietnamese have indeed taken the citadel, it will be a significant boost to their morale.

Action was light yesterday in the other four provinces of Military Region 1, although the Communists are still trying to expand their newly won footholds in the coastal lowlands. Enemy messages indicate that a command unit that normally operates in the Da Nang area has moved closer to the district capital of Tien Phuoc in Quang Tin Province. This is the first time the Viet Cong's Da Nang command headquarters has been located this far south. The move closely follows indications that the Communists have brought in additional artillery and armor units to reinforce the 711th Division already in the area.



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In the southern half of the country, fighting picked up somewhat in the An Loc area, where government troops are trying to recapture the city's airport, near Quan Loi. Several sharp engagements have been fought in this sector in recent days, and there are indications that the enemy may soon offer more determined resistance. Sharp contacts also continued in the delta, with enemy forces maintaining pressure against government outposts close to supply and infiltration corridors.

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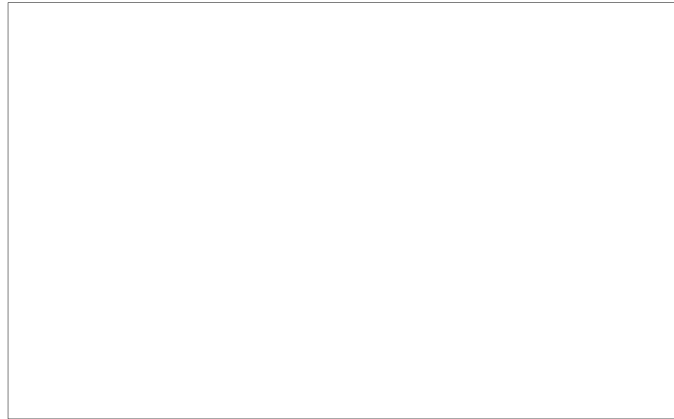
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SWEDEN-YUGOSLAVIA

The Swedish jet being hijacked by Croatian extremists left Malmo airport in southern Sweden this morning after the plane's passengers were released. The Swedish Government acceded to the hijackers' demand for the release of a number of convicted Yugoslav terrorists, including the two men who killed Yugoslav Ambassador Rolovic in 1971. The press is reporting that the passengers were released after the hijackers were paid a ransom of \$104,000.

The hijackers' intended destination is uncertain. They are reported to have asked for weather reports for several cities south of Malmo and they may head for North Africa. The hijacking, the first in Swedish history, could have serious implications for Swedish-Yugoslav relations.

The hijacking is part of a pattern of increasingly frequent ustashi--the Croatian word for "terrorist"--attacks over the last 18 months. Croat separatists have taken new heart from the upsurge in Croatian nationalism in 1971 and from the knowledge that the time left for Tito to act as a stabilizing influence is at best limited.

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Anti-terrorism feelings in Yugoslavia, from Tito down to the man in the street, are running high. If Belgrade is not satisfied with the outcome of this incident, it is likely to take matters into its own hands.

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INDIA-PAKISTAN

The stalemate continues. The two sides had agreed late last month to withdraw their forces from all occupied territory except Kashmir by 15 September, but now the Indians are insisting that the cease-fire line in Kashmir must first be delineated.

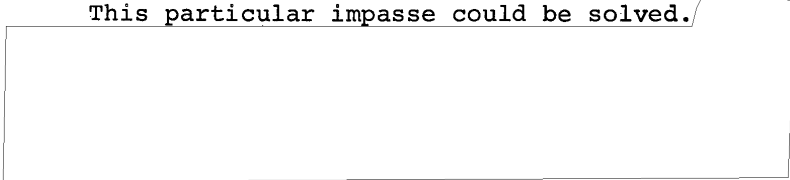
[redacted] New Delhi may intentionally be delaying the withdrawals in an effort to pressure Pakistan into recognizing Bangladesh.

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President Bhutto continues to insist that he cannot recognize the Dacca government until after a meeting between Pakistani and Bengali officials. Bangladesh Prime Minister Mujib, for his part, has publicly reiterated that recognition must take place before any such a meeting.

This particular impasse could be solved.

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Bhutto and Mujib may eventually agree to such an arrangement. A major obstacle to improved relations would remain, however, if Mujib continues to insist on Bangladesh's right to try as war criminals some of the more than 90,000 Pakistani prisoners being held in India.

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USSR-Cuba:

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