



# The President's Daily Brief

*February 14, 1976*

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USSR-CHINA

*Moscow has proposed to the Chinese that the annual Sino-Soviet river navigation talks reconvene next month.*

The joint Sino-Soviet navigation committee had met annually since 1956--alternately in China and the USSR--to discuss routine matters of navigation along the riverine border during the May-October shipping season. Last year it was China's turn to be host to the talks, but they were not held because of Soviet objections to Chinese attempts to broaden the agenda to include territorial problems.

The failure of the committee to meet last year did not seem to have any significant impact on riverine traffic. China continued to press its claim to the important islands opposite Khabarovsk and other disputed islands, and there were the usual protests back and forth about changing navigational markers and dredging operations.

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USSR

*Moscow has broken its public silence on recent developments in the French Territory of the Afars and Issas.*

Several articles in the Soviet central press on Thursday replayed Mogadiscio's version of the confrontation early this month between French forces and Somali border insurgents in the territory. Pravda noted Somali President Siad's call for the complete withdrawal of French forces from the territory and the liquidation of all military bases there.

Moscow's press treatment is restrained and is careful not to commit the Soviets to any particular outcome, but it is nonetheless a clear sign that the Soviets will support the essentials of Siad's policy.

The Soviet ambassador in Somalia said as much to a US diplomat earlier this month. He indicated that Moscow would support a "liberation struggle" in the territory if the French tried to transfer power to a government under the control of Ali Aref. The Soviets also said that the USSR hoped Paris would act in a way which would assure "peace and stability" in the African horn; this may boil down to giving Siad what he wants.

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FRANCE

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NIGERIA

*The US embassy believes General Murtala Muhammed, the head of state, was killed in yesterday's coup attempt, but this has not yet been confirmed by the government.*

A meeting of the ruling Supreme Military Council was under way last night, presumably to pick a new head of state. The second- and third-ranking members of the regime--armed forces chief Obasanjo and army chief of staff Danjuma--were also targeted for assassination but apparently are still alive. One or the other will probably emerge as Nigeria's new leader.

Both men played leading roles in the Muhammed government, and it is unlikely that Nigeria's foreign or domestic policies would change significantly under either man.

The strong support Lagos has given the Popular Movement in Angola may lead anti-US forces in Africa and elsewhere to accuse the US of complicity in the plot.



NOTE

Syrian Foreign Minister Khaddam will return to Lebanon this weekend to try to arrange a final agreement among Christians and Muslims on a political settlement.

Prime Minister Karami told reporters earlier this week that a settlement would be announced today following a special cabinet meeting. President Franjiah, however, has been noncommittal on the timing of an announcement. Some conservative Maronite Christians apparently still are insisting on a written guarantee of their exclusive control of the presidency. Regional committees supervising the truce have been able to contain the violence perpetrated by Lebanese and Palestinian extremists attempting to derail the political negotiations.

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