



The President's Daily Brief

March 31, 1976

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

LEBANON

Fighting is continuing in Beirut as Kamal Jumblatt and other Lebanese leftists resist pressure from Syria to agree to a cease-fire.

Jumblatt today reiterated his demand that President Franjiyah step down before a truce begins. Jumblatt also publicly criticized the Syrians for cutting off arms and ammunition to the leftists.

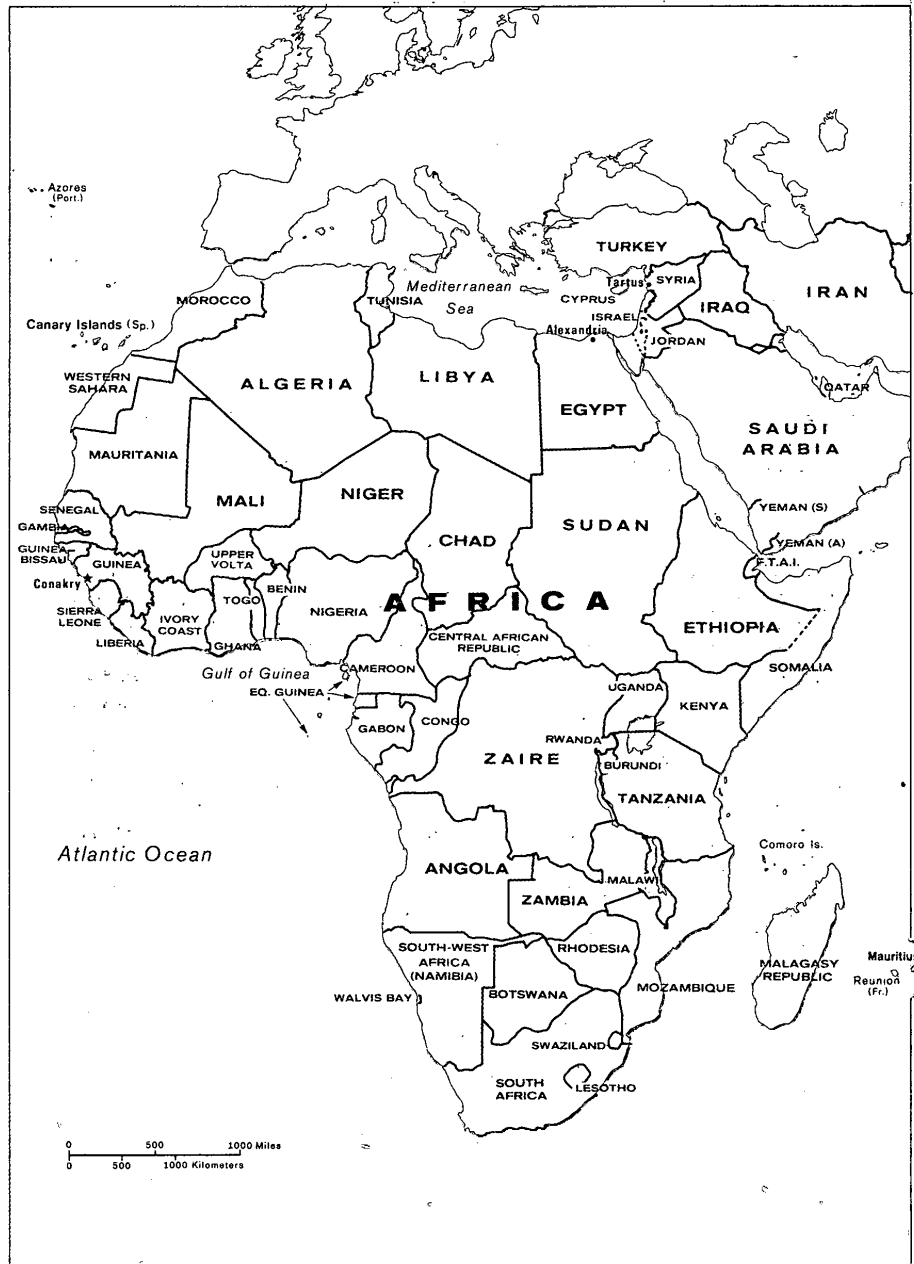
Both Jumblatt and Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasir Arafat have been under increasing pressure from Damascus to accept a truce.

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There were no indications yesterday of unusual activity by either Syrian or Israeli forces.

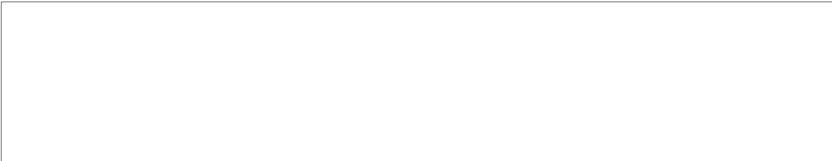


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USSR

The Soviet navy is moving ahead with the evacuation of Alexandria, which must be completed by April 15.

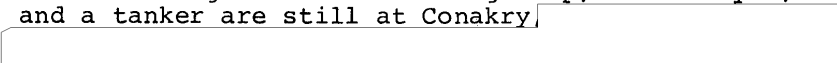


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There are now eight Soviet naval units at Tartus, Syria. Before the Egyptian decision regarding Alexandria, the Soviets kept only a naval repair ship permanently stationed in Tartus. The port lacks the extensive repair facilities found in Alexandria, but it would be adequate for mooring some of the support ships.

The Soviets are substantially reducing their naval forces in west African waters. A Kresta-II guided missile cruiser that had been off the West African coast since mid-January now is off Western Sahara, apparently heading back to the Mediterranean. Two other Soviet ships, an F-class submarine and a small tanker, have left Conakry in the past few days and also may be on their way to the Mediterranean.

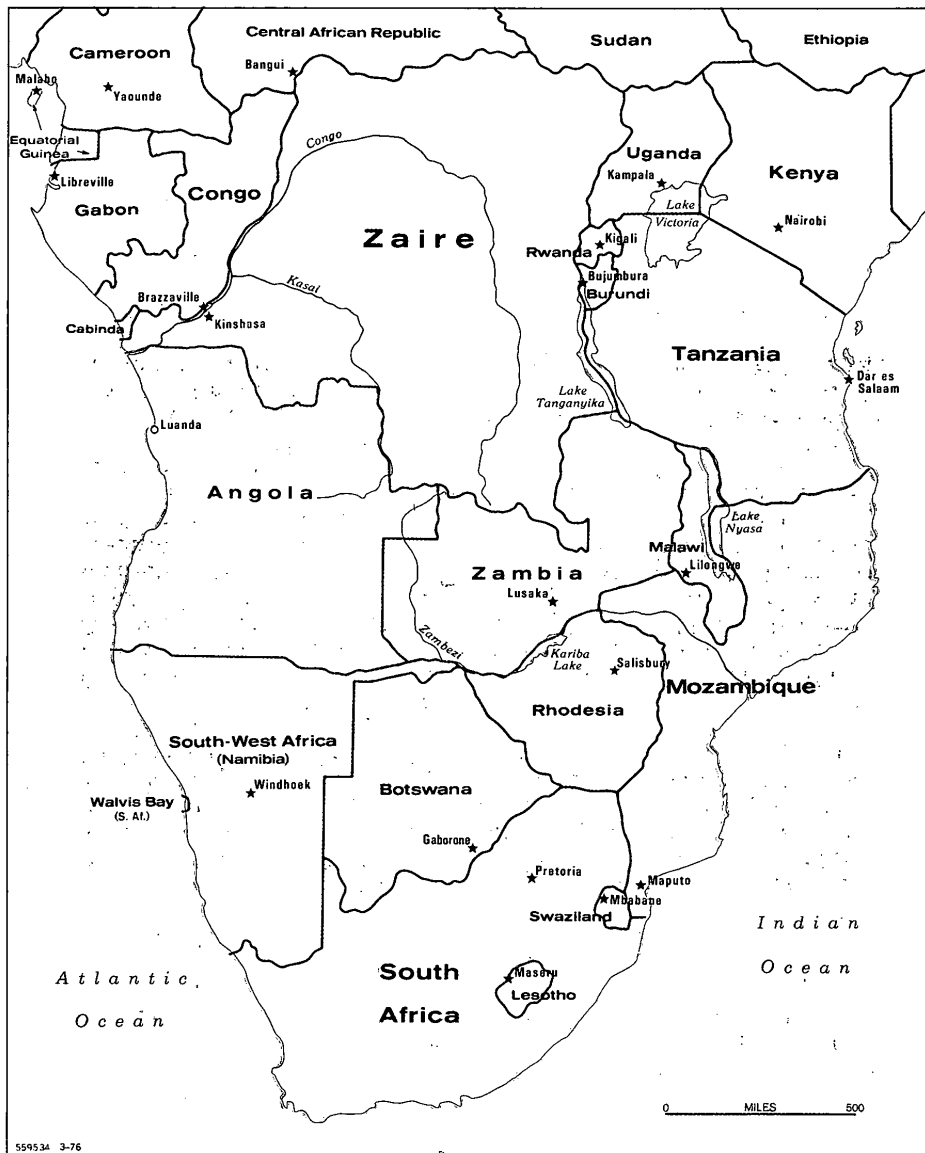
An Alligator-class landing ship, a destroyer, and a tanker are still at Conakry



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Southern Africa



ZAIRE

President Mobutu is moving to associate his government with the radical position on southern African issues. His earlier criticism of Soviet and Cuban intervention in Angola has been replaced by warnings to all major powers to stay out of southern Africa.

In view of his failure to influence events in Angola, Mobutu wants to refurbish his credentials as a leading African nationalist. He does not want to be in a position of publicly opposing other Africans who might endorse a Soviet and Cuban role--should it come to that--in forcing majority rule in Rhodesia and Namibia.

Early this month Mobutu strongly endorsed the decision of Mozambican President Machel to close his country's border with Rhodesia. Before the Rhodesian settlement talks collapsed, Zaire's controlled news media implicitly endorsed guerrilla war and criticized the efforts of nationalist leader Joshua Nkomo to achieve a negotiated settlement with Ian Smith.

Nevertheless, in conversation with US embassy officers in Kinshasa, high Zairian officials continue to reflect Mobutu's concern over Soviet and Cuban intentions. These officials have stated that Zaire's more militant public posture will be paralleled by discreet support for moderate solutions in Rhodesia and Namibia that they hope will preempt Soviet and Cuban involvement.

NOTES

Presidents Kaunda of Zambia, Nyerere of Tanzania, Machel of Mozambique, and Khama of Botswana have failed again to persuade Rhodesian nationalist Joshua Nkomo and his rival, Bishop Abel Muzorewa, to bury their differences.

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[redacted] there is no indication as to what if any new plans were agreed upon. The presidents apparently have little hope that any new attempt at a peaceful settlement can be mounted, although our embassy in Lusaka believes that Nkomo and possibly Kaunda are still ready to grasp at any straw that might avert all-out warfare.

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Greek Cypriots mark the start of their anti-colonial guerilla war against the British in 1955.

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The anniversary last year was marked by exchanges of gunfire all along the cease-fire line separating Greek Cypriot and Turkish forces. There have been indications that US officials and property may be potential targets of terrorist attacks.

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