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19 October 1960

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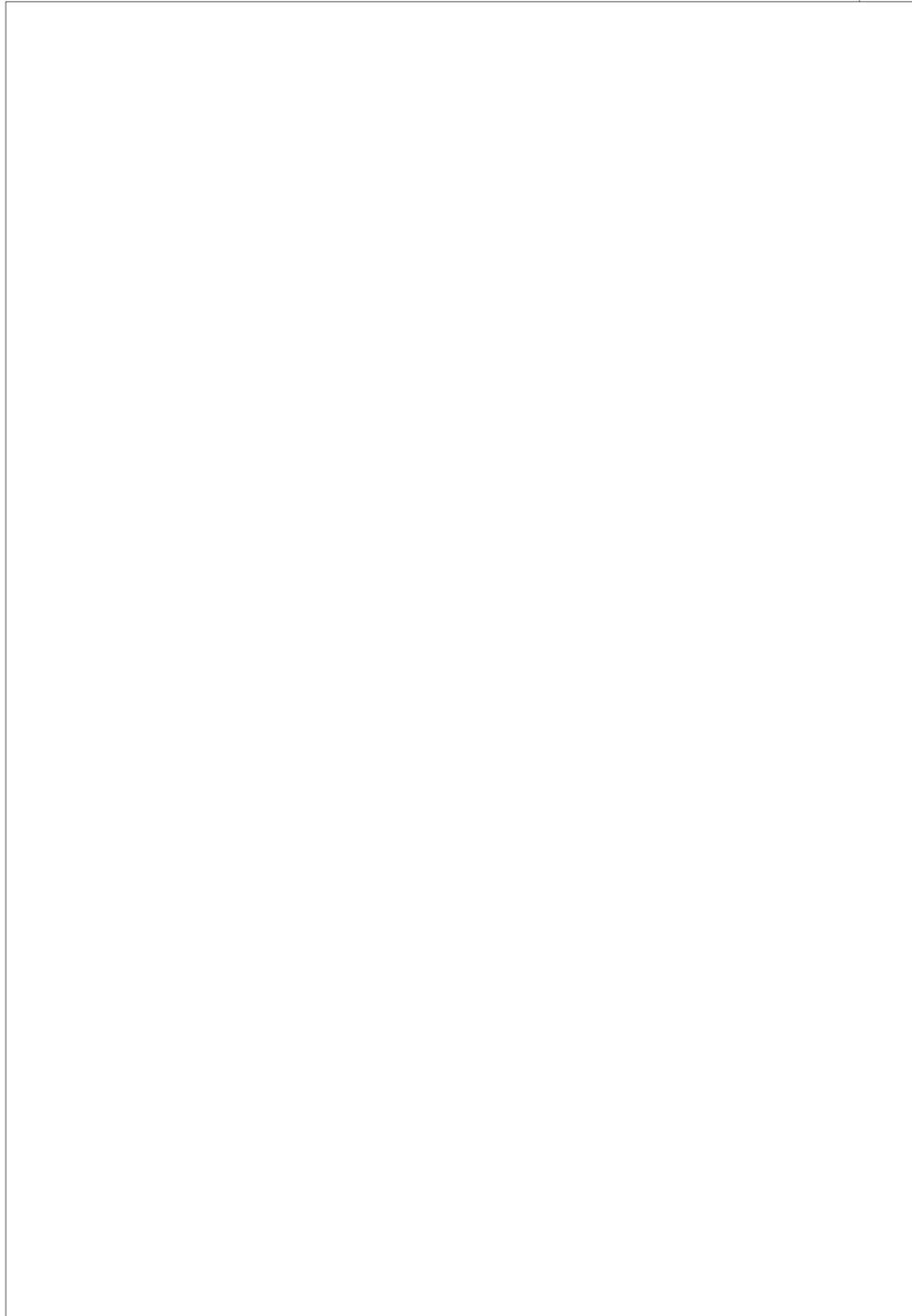
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN



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19 OCTOBER 1960

I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC**II. ASIA-AFRICA**

South Vietnamese cabinet changes announced yesterday seem insufficient to stop growth of political opposition to Diem regime.

Situation in Laos.

Qasim again reported target of assassination and coup plots in Iraq.

Nasir's pleas for "unity" and personal attacks on Husayn suggest he is genuinely concerned over separatist sentiment in Syria; Amman reported uneasy, with expectations of further serious UAR-Jordan trouble.

Power struggle in newly independent Gabon could lead to "complete breakdown of authority" there.

Situation in the Congo.

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

19 October 1960

DAILY BRIEF

I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

II. ASIA-AFRICA

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South Vietnam: The cabinet reshuffle announced yesterday apparently represents a gesture by President Diem toward meeting some of the criticism from within and without government circles over his authoritarian leadership. It is also possible, however, that Diem may take this opportunity to remove officials critical of him. In any event, the changes announced, which affect four ministries, do not suggest any intention by Diem to relax his personal control over certain key ministries or any significant weakening of the influence of his chief political adviser, his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu. Unless Diem is prepared to follow up with more sweeping measures to win public support, the political opposition to his regime will probably continue to grow.

(Page 1)

Laos: King Savang now seems more likely to intervene directly in the political crisis in Laos. According to Defense Secretary General Ouane, Savang will shortly proclaim himself "supreme commander" and make public a letter of resignation already sent by Ouane to Premier Souvanna Phouma. The King and Ouane seem to be hoping that this will pave the way for Souvanna's resignation and the establishment of a military regime. Ouane also states that Souvanna is requesting, through the Soviet delegation now in Vientiane, the return of the International Supervisory and Control Commission to Laos.

(Page 2)

Iraq: Anti-Communist civilian and army elements in Iraq, believing Prime Minister Qasim has shifted to the left in recent weeks, are reported to be planning action against him in the near

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future. One civilian Arab nationalist group is said to be plotting to kill him by destroying his car with bazooka fire; at the same time, some disgruntled army officers allegedly are planning a coup. Qasim has weathered several coup attempts and one assassination effort.

(Page 3)

UAR-Jordan: During his current visit to Syria, UAR President Nasir is using sharp personal attacks on Jordan's King Husayn in an effort to bolster the flagging enthusiasm in Syria for the Egyptian-Syrian union. Nasir's demagogic tactics and repeated pleas for "unity" suggest he is genuinely concerned over the growing separatist feeling in the UAR's Northern Region.

In Jordan, Nasir's attacks on Husayn have aroused a popular pro-Nasir reaction among Arabs of Palestinian West Jordan. Amman is reported uneasy, with expectations of further serious Jordan-UAR trouble. Husayn, meanwhile, has sought increased British assistance to stave off an impending financial crisis in the Jordanian Army.

(Page 4)

Gabon: Gabon, one of the eight French Community states which became independent in August, is in the throes of an internal struggle for power which could, the American chargé in Brazzaville reports, lead to a "complete breakdown of authority." Although information from this country is sparse, the position of conservative, pro-French President Leon M'Ba reportedly is being strongly challenged by influential elements within his regime headed by National Assembly President Gondjout and Foreign Minister Gustave Anguile.

(Page 6) (Map)

*Republic of the Congo: Although the political stalemate in Leopoldville continues, UN officials' protection of Lumumba has tended to erode Mobutu's position. Recent setbacks for Mobutu include UN representative Dayal's refusal to oust Lumumba from the premier's residence in Leopoldville, as well

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as UN Under Secretary Bunche's stated hope that "in a matter of weeks" the Congolese parliament might be reconvened and a government created "which the UN could support." Mobutu stated on 17 October his opposition to a reconvening of parliament and his intention of continuing "army rule" at least until the end of the year.

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~~SECRET~~Cabinet Reshuffle in South Vietnam

The cabinet reshuffle announced in Saigon on 18 October appears to be a gesture by President Diem to deal with dissatisfaction in and out of government circles over the worsening security situation and over his own authoritarian rule. New appointments to the defense and interior ministries, coupled with plans to reinforce military intelligence and command functions, are probably meant to strengthen the campaign against the Communist guerrillas; changes in the information and justice ministries are probably aimed more broadly at political discontent.

The changes, however, do not suggest any intention by Diem to relax his tight control or to weaken the role of his brother and chief political adviser, Ngo Dinh Nhu, a primary target of criticism. Diem's retention of the defense post for himself and his tendency to control provincial appointments through instructions to the Ministry of Interior may deny effective authority to the new appointees. Also, the information ministry is to be replaced by a directorate-general, presumably to function under the presidential secretary, raising doubt that the replacement of the responsible minister will result in the reforms of censorship and control demanded by Diem's critics. The ministerial changes are among several long sought by Ngo Dinh Nhu, who had been under sharp criticism from the previous incumbents. As such, they may be the prelude to further moves by Nhu to remove his opponents in the government.

Unless Diem is prepared to follow up the reshuffle with broader measures to combat rural discontent and to open up channels for responsible criticism, political opposition will probably continue to grow.

sweeping changes in Diem's military as well as civilian entourage were needed to prevent the collapse of the government.

if so inclined, he could take over the government within four hours with his own troops.

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~~SECRET~~The Situation in Laos

King Savang now seems more disposed toward playing an active role in trying to resolve the crisis in Laos. General Ouane, secretary of state for defense.

[redacted] the King planned to broadcast a proclamation that he has "taken over" as "supreme commander." At the same time he will make public a letter of resignation already sent by Ouane to Premier Souvanna Phouma. The King and Ouane seem to be hoping that this step will induce Souvanna to resign, thereby paving the way for a transitional military government.

Ouane also claims that he is planning action against Captain Kong Le and his 2nd Paratroop Battalion. He will request General Phoumi to create a diversion by attacking Pak Ca Dinh, southeast of Pak Sane, which he hopes will draw Kong Le's paratroopers away from Vientiane. A force of 300 infantry under Captain Southeep, now located in Vientiane, would then move to take control of the city. Ouane believes the Southeep force will be ready for action in about a week.

[redacted] The success of these plans would seem to depend in large measure on Souvanna's willingness to resign. Souvanna may refuse to recognize the validity of any proclamation by the King setting up a military government in Luang Prabang, claiming that Savang was a "captive" of elements in rebellion against the legal government. This would leave the situation sufficiently murky to give an air of justification to any Sino-Soviet bloc diplomatic support of Souvanna.

Ouane also states that Souvanna is requesting, through the Soviet delegation now in Vientiane, the return of the International Supervisory and Control Commission (ISCC) to Laos. Any such request may actually have been stimulated by Soviet Ambassador-designate Abramov. In his restrained remarks to the press on 15 October, Abramov noted that the USSR is a co-chairman of the Geneva Conference which set up the ISCC in 1954. Before its disbandment in 1958, a move opposed by the Polish member, the ISCC tended to favor the Pathet Lao.

[redacted]

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~~SECRET~~Renewed Anti-Qasim Plotting in Iraq

Growing discontent over Qasim's policies and his apparent favoring of the Communists in recent weeks has revived plotting by civilian and army elements against him. One anti-Communist civilian group allegedly is planning to assassinate Qasim with bazooka fire while he is riding in his car. Other reports state that anti-Communist army and air force officers have decided to attempt a coup in the immediate future. This military group had been previously reported formulating plans for a coup, but had delayed in carrying it out in the hope that Qasim would stop depending on the Communists.

Qasim's recent crackdown on several anti-Communist newspapers and his patronage of the congress of the Communist-dominated International Union of Students now being held in Baghdad have alarmed all anti-Communist elements.

Iraq now is polarized into a well-organized and highly vocal Communist minority and a strongly anti-Communist but faction-ridden majority. There is official and public disenchantment with the Soviet bloc economic assistance to which Qasim has committed the country, and Qasim' has lost a great deal of respect and popular support. The absence of real progress in the country's economic development since the revolution has resulted in further discontent.

Reported dissatisfaction in army circles with Soviet military equipment is an added factor for attempting to loosen Iraq's ties with the Soviet bloc. A committee which has been meeting for the past three weeks discussing Soviet military aid is said to be "convinced that Iraq has been sold much equipment either obsolete or unsuitable for the army's needs."

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~~SECRET~~Nasir Carries Anti-Husayn Campaign to Syria

Since arriving in Latakia on a surprise visit beginning 14 October, Nasir has used King Husayn as a whipping boy in an obvious effort to distract Syrians from their difficulties with his own regime. In speeches in Latakia, Aleppo, Hama, and Damascus, Nasir attacked the Jordanian King, who recently made anti-UAR comments at the United Nations. Husayn's airing of an Arab dispute in the international assembly and the alleged murder of a Syrian pilot who crash-landed in Jordan provided Nasir with points of departure for his attack. His popular reception has been enthusiastic, but his repeated emphasis on the solidity of Egyptian-Syrian unity reflects his concern over conditions in Syria.

[Dissension within the Syrian cabinet appears to be a major concern and, [redacted] was the reason for Nasir's visit. Cabinet chairman Abd al-Hamid Sarraj, whose heavy-handed tactics may be the cause of the difficulties, has been conspicuous in Nasir's touring group. A faltering economy, plotting against the Cairo regime by Syrian dissidents, and possible Jordanian-Iraqi moves in support of such elements are other important problems Nasir must consider.]

[The UAR's propaganda offensive reportedly has caused an unprecedented upsurge of enthusiasm for Nasir in Palestinian West Jordan, where there is said to be outspoken criticism of Husayn and his regime. Pro-Nasir feeling also is running high among Amman's lower classes. Uneasiness in Jordanian business and government circles has led to the flight of capital to Beirut and the departure of some business leaders.]

[Husayn, when he stopped in London on his way home from New York, sought to obtain increased and accelerated British military assistance to stave off an approaching financial crisis in the Jordanian Army, hastened by the recent troop movements and concentrations along the Syrian border. [redacted]]

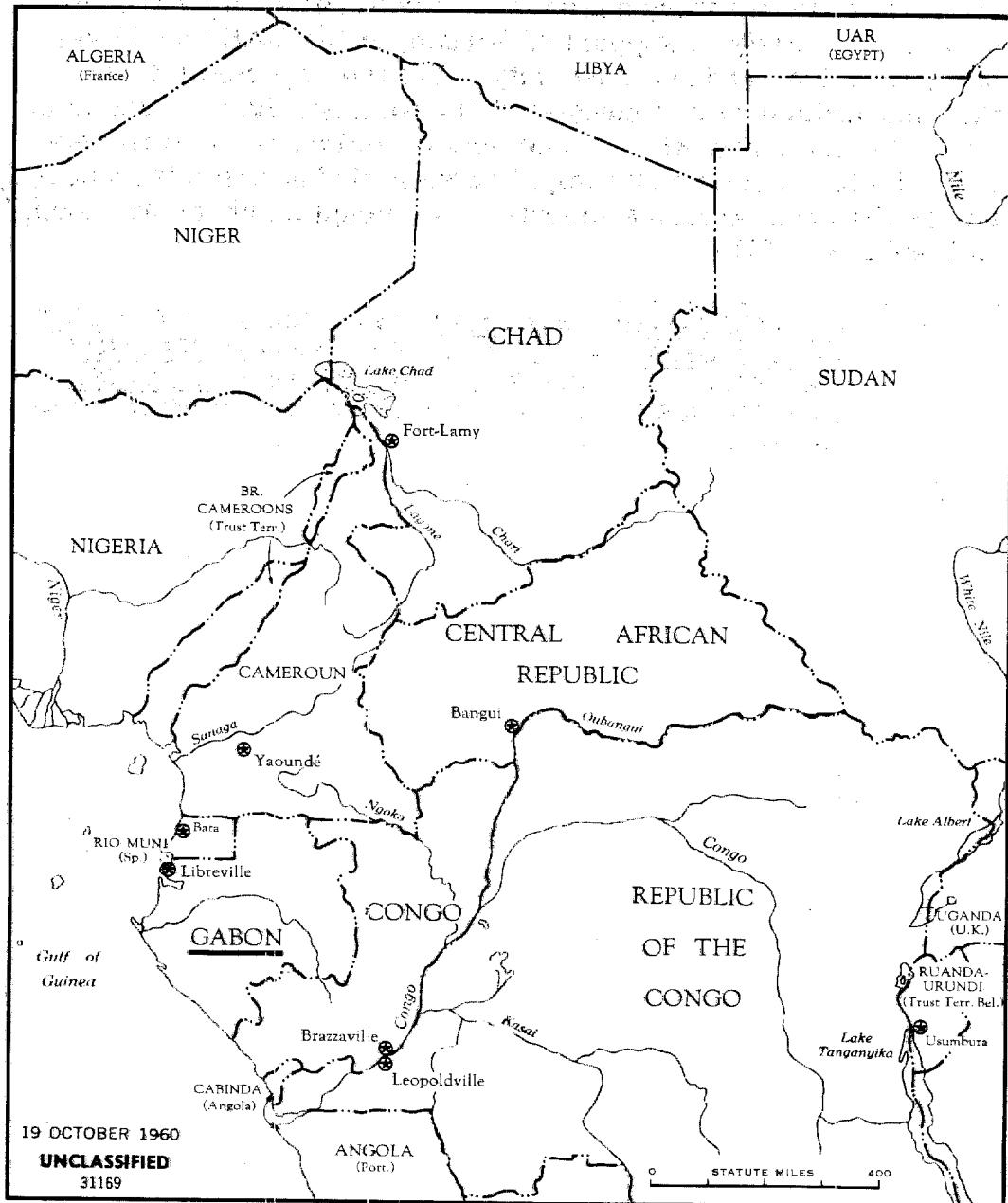
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[redacted] the UK, instead of increasing the level of its military assistance, would rather agree to intervene militarily in support of Jordan, if the UAR should seriously threaten Jordanian security. Husayn reportedly found this unsatisfactory and suggested Jordan might have to consider using the army now while its combat effectiveness is still relatively high. It seems unlikely, however, that he will intervene in Syria unless dissident Syrian elements first mount a successful coup.

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~~CONFIDENTIAL~~Power Struggle Under Way in Gabon

A potentially disruptive struggle for power appears to have developed recently within the ruling regime of Gabon, the richest of the four states which have emerged from former French Equatorial Africa. Gabon is one of the 11 French Community states which became independent last summer and gained admittance to the UN in September.

Although reporting from the area is sparse, the position of conservative provisional President Leon M'Ba, who gives the impression of being more French than Gabonese in his outlook, is reportedly being challenged by ambitious elements headed by Paul Gondjout, the president of the National Assembly, and Gustave Anguile, an influential cabinet member who represents the most highly developed segment of Gabonese society. Characterized by the American chargé in Brazzaville as highly intelligent and energetic, Anguile reportedly was influenced in the past by Gabonese students in Paris who were members of Communist organizations. Already in charge of the important Ministry of Finance, Economic Affairs, and Planning, he was named foreign minister as well, following his recent return from the UN. Should he and Gondjout break the hold M'Ba has had over the Gabonese Government since 1957, the chargé believes a "complete breakdown of authority" might follow.

The struggle now under way may portend trouble for powerful French economic interests, especially those associated with lumbering, the country's basic industry. More so than in any other new African state, these interests, in addition to retaining a dominant economic position, have so far remained a significant force throughout all levels of the political structure as well.

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