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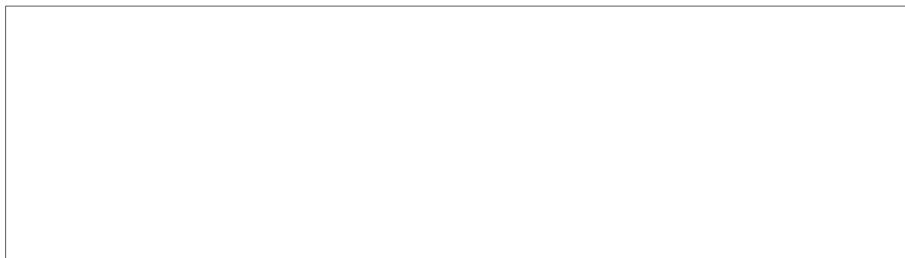
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THE ARAB-ISRAELI SITUATION

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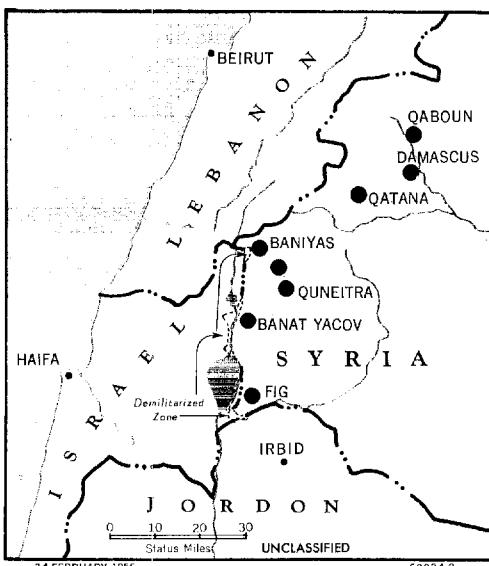
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1. SYRIA CONCENTRATES FORCES ON ISRAELI BORDER



Damascus [redacted] has moved major elements of the Syrian army to positions close to the Israeli frontier, with strength centered in the Quneitra-Qatana area. These elements include half an armored brigade, half an infantry brigade formerly stationed in northern Syria, and portions of another brigade normally based in the northwest. Other units have also been brought up from far rear areas to where they can be more readily available.

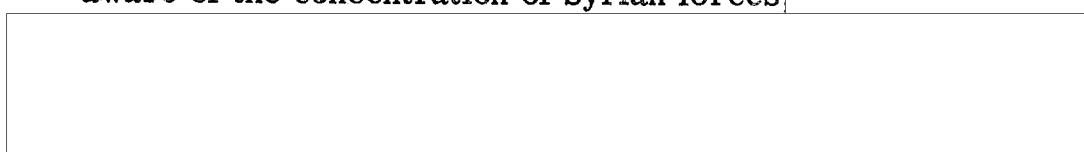


[redacted] these moves were made because of Syria's weakness in transport and Israel's capability of interdicting the roads in case hostilities should break out. [redacted] a secret "all-out" mobilization has been ordered.

[redacted] no reserve remains to cope with the eventuality of a major Israeli breakthrough. [redacted] Syrian public opinion nevertheless demanded that a maximum force be at the frontier.

Comment

This concentration of Syrian forces, which reflects Syrian leaders' fear that Israel plans some action on or about 1 March, creates an unusually explosive situation and increases the danger that a local incident might draw in major units and thus lead to large-scale hostilities. The Israelis are almost certainly aware of the concentration of Syrian forces [redacted]

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2. AUSTRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER CONTEMPLATING PROTEST TO BONN ON BALLOON OVERFLIGHTS

Austrian foreign minister Figl told American officials in Vienna on 23 February he was contemplating a protest to the West German government on propaganda balloon overflights of Austrian territory.

He referred to charges in the Soviet press that the United States had violated Austrian neutrality by troop movements and overflights of military planes and balloons. He said he would deny the charge on troop movements and hoped to avoid commenting on overflights, but added that the balloon issue was a very uncomfortable one for Austria.

American officials believe the balloons are not only embarrassing the Austrian government but are causing anti-American feeling in Austria and that Austria might terminate Radio Free Europe activities there.

Comment

Vienna is very sensitive to any criticism of Austria's conduct of its policy of neutrality. Action against Radio Free Europe would offset the expulsion of the Communist-sponsored World Federation of Trade Unions early this month. A protest to Bonn would counter Soviet charges that Austria's neutrality is being violated without protest from Vienna.

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3. PROLONGED VIET MINH DROUGHT MAY RUIN SPRING CROP

Showing no signs of a letup after 16 months of drought and two years of crop failures, the severe shortage of rain has again ruined seedling rice and has necessitated widespread replanting, the drilling of at least 10,000 wells, the allocation of military manpower to irrigation projects, and the formation of a "Central Drought Committee" by the premier.

All of North Vietnam's provinces have been affected. In many areas hit by the September 1955 typhoon, fresh water for irrigation is still not available.

An increase in Soviet bloc assistance to the area is suggested by a rise during February in deliveries of Burmese rice under the Soviet aid program.

(Prepared by ORR)

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4. INDONESIAN CABINET TO RESIGN 2 MARCH

[redacted] The central committee of the Masjumi party, which heads the Indonesian coalition cabinet, decided on 23 February that the cabinet should resign its mandate on 2 March. This decision has been reported to President Sukarno. Just before the decision, the committee voted overwhelmingly in favor of Vice Chairman Sukiman's more nationalistic policies as opposed to those of Chairman Natsir.

[redacted] the 23 February vote means that Sukiman will direct Masjumi policy during the formation of the new government, and that the timing of the decision to resign will make co-operation easier between the Masjumi on the one hand and the National Party and the Nahdlatul Ulama on the other. [redacted]

Comment

The new parliament is expected to be seated sometime between 10 and 20 March. The change in de facto Masjumi leadership would probably serve to increase the possibility of Masjumi participation in the next cabinet. Sukiman is personally more acceptable to the opposition National Party and the Nahdlatul Ulama and also to President Sukarno than is Natsir. He is also reported to be more skilled at political maneuvering.

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5. INDONESIAN CHARGÉ IN PEIPING SEES NO CHINESE DISSATISFACTION WITH SOVIET MOVES IN ASIA

Comment

Representatives of foreign governments in Peiping are almost unanimous in the opinion that there are no signs of policy divergence between the USSR and Communist China. Yugoslav officials, however, have usually emphasized that Peiping is relatively independent of Moscow and that the potential exists for an increase in China's freedom of action.

Despite the possibility that more direct participation by the USSR in Asian affairs rivals Peiping's bid for leadership in Asia, the Chinese Communists publicly supported the recent Soviet moves toward Asian countries. They publicized the concept of Chinese Communist-Soviet-Indian solidarity on international matters, identified the USSR as a member of the Asian community, and "welcomed" the offers of Soviet assistance to other Asian countries.

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**6. SOVIET AMBASSADOR SUGGESTS RE-ESTABLISHING
DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH BRAZIL**

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**7. SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICIALS IN MEXICO TO MAKE
SECOND TRIP TO SOUTH AMERICA**

[redacted] for Argentina, [redacted]

Ambassador Kulazhenkov and First Secretary Kazantsev of the Soviet embassy in Mexico City are scheduled to depart by air on 27 February

Comment

The Argentine ambassador in Washington stated recently that the two Soviet representatives were planning an "immediate" four-day visit to Buenos Aires as guests of the Soviet ambassador there. The Soviet ambassadors may be planning to co-ordinate their efforts for future approaches on the diplomatic level to Latin American governments in support of Soviet premier Bulganin's public bid on 16 January for diplomatic and economic relations with Latin America.

Kulazhenkov and Kazantsev visited Ecuador two months ago on their first trip in Latin America outside of Mexico. They expressed interest in establishing diplomatic relations and reportedly made "attractive" offers of arms and economic assistance to the Velasco government.

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THE ARAB-ISRAELI SITUATION
(Information as of 1700, 24 February)

An exchange of fire between Egyptian and Israeli patrols along the Gaza strip has been reported by Cairo. (Press)

Syrian chief of staff Shuqayr told the American army attaché on 22 February that an agreement in principle has been reached with Czechoslovakia to supply arms. All that remains to be done is to select the types and quantities desired. Shuqayr said the total amount of money involved was not known but he believed Syria would get all the arms it needs.

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