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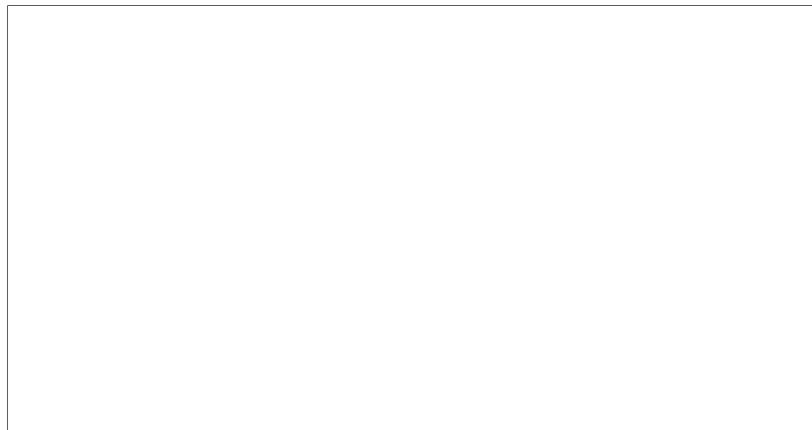
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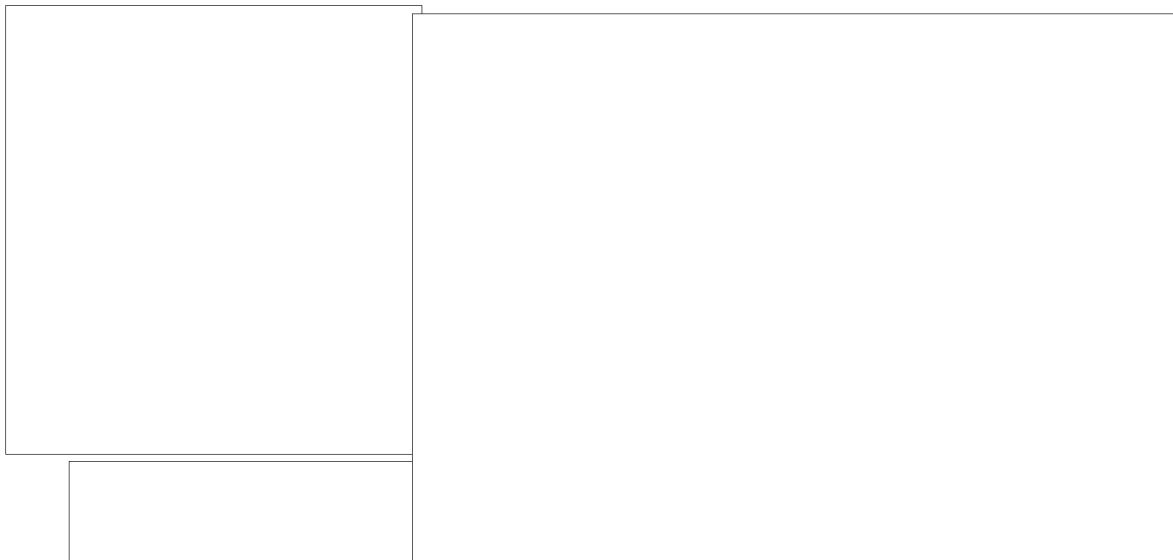
1. UN OFFICIAL OUTLINES SITUATION IN GAZA STRIP

A UN official has informed a member of the American delegation that press reports concerning the situation in the Gaza strip and the nature of Egyptian activity there are not accurate. According to this official, some shift of UN troops designed to place a higher proportion of them on the Egyptian-Israeli armistice line has begun, but it is not contemplated that all, or even two thirds, of the UNEF will now be placed on the line.

As of 19 March, UN officials on the scene reported that the strip was completely peaceful, with no demonstrations and no Egyptian troops in evidence. Units of the UNEF were to be seen throughout the strip. UNEF headquarters is remaining in Gaza city, although it has moved out of the building originally used by it. Reports that the force planned to move to El Auja, in the demilitarized zone farther south, are stated to be completely without foundation.

The UN relief agency has not, as some reports stated, turned over its functions to the Egyptians; on the contrary, it is resuming full responsibility for all refugee matters, and this constitutes full control as far as two thirds of the strip's population is concerned.

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~~TOP SECRET~~**2. NASR TELLS SAUD HE WILL RECEIVE RICHARDS MISSION****Comment**

Ambassador Richards is tentatively scheduled to arrive in Cairo on 28 April.

It is unlikely that Nasr expects to gain much from the Richards mission and there are indications he is encouraging Jordanian and Syrian hostility to it.

Nasr's reference to Aqaba suggests he still wants to convince Saud that problems such as this should be resolved before any decision is made regarding co-operation with the United States.

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3. USSR ENCOURAGES EGYPT'S FIRM STAND ON GAZA

G. T. Zaitsev, chief of the Middle East Division of the Soviet Foreign Ministry, advised the Egyptian ambassador [redacted] that he did not see "great danger in the Gaza events" and commended Egypt for its "firm stand there," [redacted]

Zaitsev urged Egypt to try to get rid of all United Nations Emergency Forces "in the fastest time, before other forces replace them."

Comment

Moscow radio told Arab audiences on 13 March that the UNEF personnel "should take off their blue hats and return to their homelands," and Soviet deputy foreign minister Zorin privately warned Cairo on 7 March that "General Burns might one day call American troops" into Gaza and that "once in, they will be difficult to get out!"

Although Cairo would almost certainly interpret the Soviet remarks as support for the Egyptian position, it apparently does not intend to press for the withdrawal of the UNEF from Gaza at this time. Cairo consulted the Soviet Union and India before issuing its "communiqué" on the Suez Canal.

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4. ISRAELI SHIPPING IN THE GULF OF AQABA

Comment on:

Contrary to earlier reports, it now appears that no Israeli-flag vessel has yet passed the former Egyptian blockade positions at the entrance of the Gulf of Aqaba and that neither Israel nor Egypt regards the passage of foreign-flag vessels under present conditions as constituting tests of Israel's right to free and innocent passage.

The Malkat Sheva (Queen of Sheba), which was to have sailed from Eilat for the straits on 18 March, returned to port. From 10 November until this week, this ship sailed between Eilat and Massawa, Eritrea, under Israeli colors; it has now resumed its previous name, Pandora, and its Costa Rican flag, under which it reportedly departed Eilat on 20 March.

A Cairo press report that Saudi Arabia would oppose by force the passage of Israel-bound shipping at this time appears to be without foundation.

King Saud's fear that Israel "will undertake some unpredictable, surprise action" and his belief that the Arabs should maintain "calm and quiet" so that the Israelis cannot use any Arab action to attain their aims. The passage used by vessels going through the straits appears in any case to be beyond the effective range of the 25-pounder artillery which the Saudis placed on the eastern shore last summer.

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5. SYRIAN EXTREME RIGHTISTS MAY ENTER CURRENT STRUGGLE

[redacted] Leaders of the extreme rightist Syrian Socialist National Party exiled in Lebanon have decided to capitalize on the present Syrian crisis by launching a coup d'etat

against the leftist government clique in Damascus, [redacted] The party's "fighters" in Lebanon were ordered to assemble and be ready to move to Syria by the evening of 19 March. [redacted]

Comment The Baath has been engaged in trying to liquidate the Socialist Nationalists during the past several years and has largely broken their strength inside Syria even though many adherents still remain there. The Socialist Nationalists do, however, maintain a disciplined and fanatic cadre in Lebanon which could create trouble inside Syria.

If this group intervenes in the present Syrian situation, the currently contending factions might well draw together into a common front against the Socialist Nationalists, since both G-2 chief Sarraj and the leaders of the group which is trying to oust him are opposed to the Socialist Nationalists' aims. Chances of eliminating leftist influence in Syria would then be considerably reduced.

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6. NEW SYRIAN ARMS CONTRACTS WITH USSR

Comment on:

The Syrian arms mission in Moscow asked Damascus [redacted] to indicate the quantity desired of napalm bombs for use by jet planes. Since napalm bombs were not included in the initial contract under the November Soviet-Syrian arms agreement, additional contracts appear to be under consideration. On the same day, Syria confirmed orders for four additional radar-controlled 85-mm. antiaircraft guns and 500 additional 12.7-mm. machine guns.

The initial contract included up to 30 MIG-17 aircraft, over 300 artillery pieces and several hundred vehicles. A substantial part, including possibly as many as 20 MIG-17's, has already been delivered. Soviet military technicians have accompanied this materiel to assemble it and instruct in its use.

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7. PHILIPPINE LIBERAL PARTY SEES CHANCE FOR COMEBACK

[Redacted] [Redacted]
Leaders of the opposition Liberal Party, now free of a commitment to help re-elect Magsaysay in November, decided in a strategy meeting

on 18 March to persuade a former Speaker of the House, José Yulo, to run as their candidate, according to a Liberal congressman. They believe the Nacionalista Party will split over support for the ultranationalist Recto or the new incumbent, President Garcia, opening the way to a victory for the Liberal Party in the election. [Redacted]

Comment

In conversations with American officials, the Liberals have pointed out that their own foreign policy views are closer to Magsaysay's than those of the Nacionalistas, who traditionally have stood for a narrow nationalism.

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8. CHOU EN-LAI DECIDES TO MEET WITH BURMESE PREMIER IN KUNMING

Comment on:

Premier Chou En-lai, contrary to an earlier decision, will make an effort to meet with Burmese premier U Nu on the border question when the

latter visits Yunnan Province the end of this week. Originally, Vice Premier Ho Lung had been scheduled to do the honors.

Chou's decision is in line with Peiping's effort to maintain the appearance of reasonableness in regard to a border settlement and thus to forestall renewal of Rangoon's propaganda campaign on the problem.