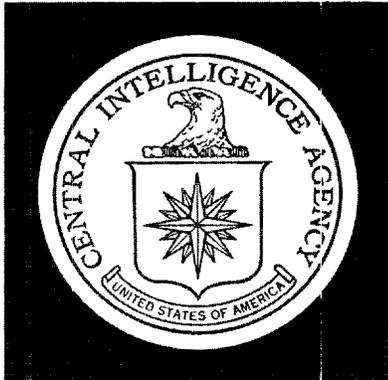




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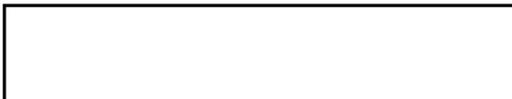


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Central Intelligence Bulletin

State Dept., JCS reviews completed.

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214

11 March 1968

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11 March 1968

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Central Intelligence Bulletin

CONTENTS

South Vietnam: Situation report. (Page 1)

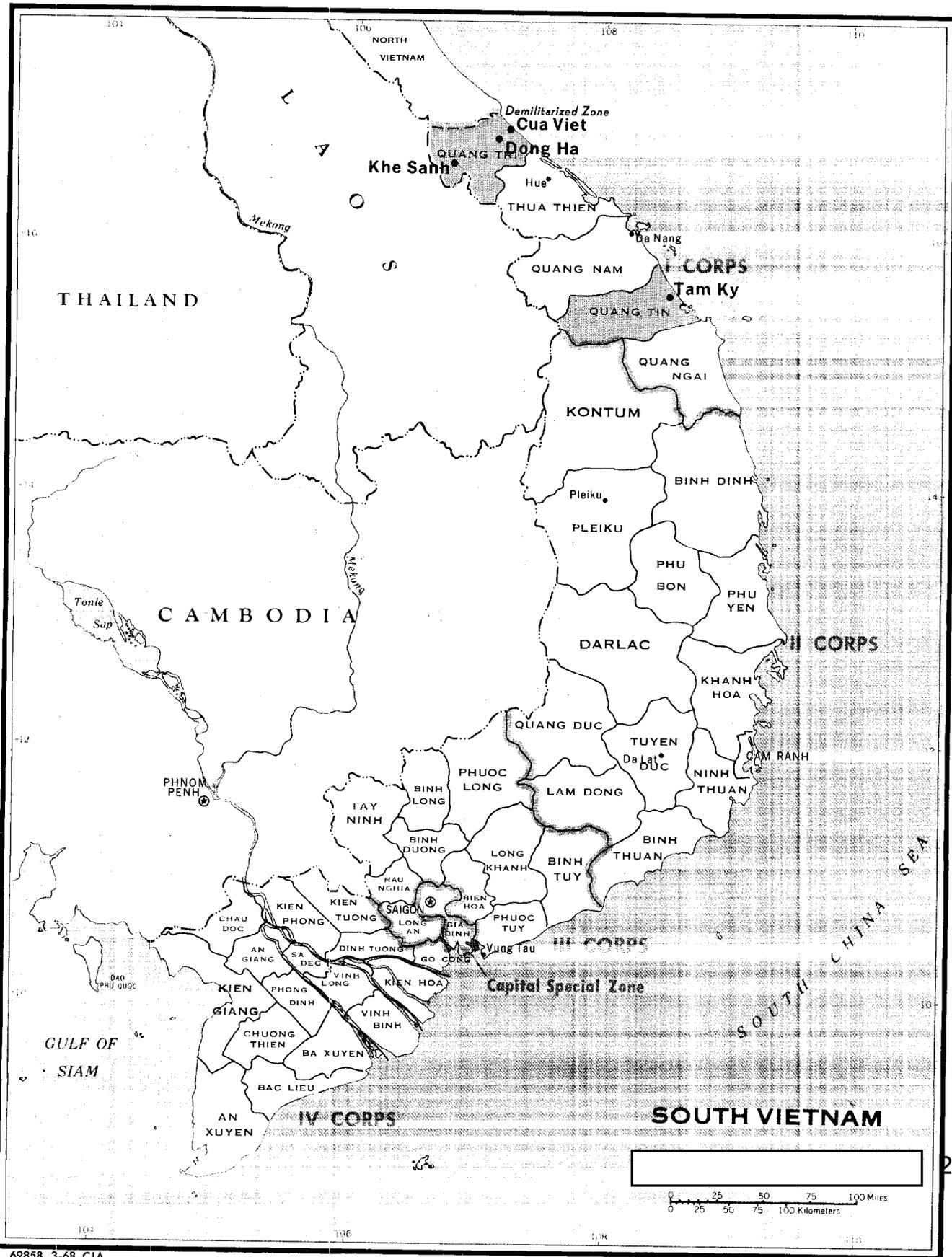
Laos: Communists overrun vital part of important government guerrilla base. (Page 2)

Panama: Political showdown could come today. (Page 3)

Poland: Student demonstrations may spread to other elements. (Page 4)

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69858 3-68 CIA

11 Mar 68 CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN Map

*South Vietnam: Two large battles climaxed the weekend in the northern part of South Vietnam amid continued enemy shelling of allied positions across northern Quang Tri Province.

Some 300 Communists were killed as the result of engagements with allied troops near Dong Ha and the Quang Tin provincial capital of Tam Ky. These encounters apparently developed as the result of renewed allied sweep operations into areas where North Vietnamese main force units have been maneuvering. Friendly casualties were reported light.

In northern Quang Tri Province, hundreds of rounds of enemy artillery, rocket, and mortar fire pounded US and South Vietnamese positions from the US Marine garrison at Khe Sanh to the US Navy's big supply complex on the coast at Cua Viet. Although only sporadic, light attacks-by-fire were reported elsewhere, there are continuing indications of impending Communist military offensives in widespread sections of the country.

The formal launching of a broadly based, anti-Communist popular front at a large rally in Saigon on 10 March was marred somewhat by the absence of several prominent politicians who had initially lent support. Suspicion that the front is a vehicle for the ambitions of certain politicians is causing a lukewarm attitude by others, while complete disinterest is reported in much of the Delta. It thus remains highly questionable whether the front will be able to make any substantial headway in its stated purpose of trying to rally a more active public commitment behind the struggle against the Communists. [REDACTED]

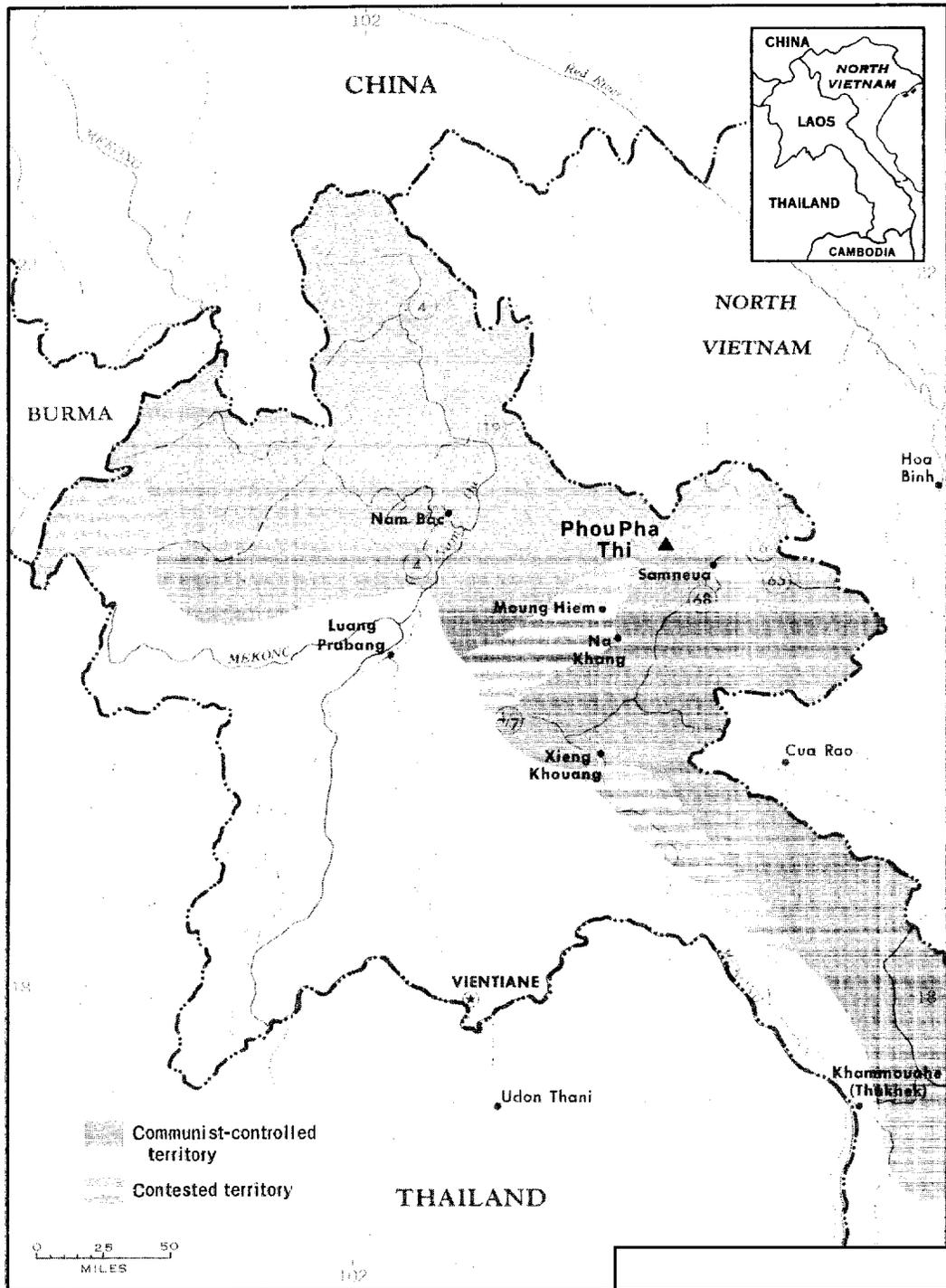
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11 Mar 68

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NORTHERN LAOS



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11 Mar 68 CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN Map

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*Laos: The Communists have overrun a vital part of the important guerrilla base at Phou Pha Thi.

Incomplete reports indicate that the enemy followed up the seizure of outlying defensive positions around the camp with a heavy mortar barrage on 10 March and then infiltrated the radar site atop the hill surmounting the camp. Deteriorating security necessitated the attempted evacuation of American personnel. Four Americans were killed; 11 remain unaccounted for, according to the latest information from the embassy in Vientiane.

The loss of the radar site at Phou Pha Thi, which was the target of a North Vietnamese air attack in early January, deprives the US of important navigational support for air operations over Laos and North Vietnam.

Since the Communists have thus far concentrated a majority of their forces in the northeast this dry season on the elimination of this base, government forces hope to hold out as long as possible in order to keep an enemy force of upwards of seven battalions tied down. [redacted]

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11 Mar 68

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Panama: The long-awaited showdown in the political crisis could come today.

President Robles reportedly plans to order national guard commandant General Vallarino to stop the National Assembly meeting scheduled for 5:00 p. m. EST. The assembly is prepared to indict Robles for interference in the electoral process and lay the groundwork for an impeachment trial.

If Robles issues the order and Vallarino obeys, Arnulfo Arias is likely to follow through on threats to call his supporters into the streets. Arias is planning a mass demonstration as the assembly meets. Unless he can get his followers out in significant numbers, however, the government and perhaps Vallarino will conclude that Arias has lost his appeal to the masses.

On the other hand, if Vallarino refuses to execute Robles' order he would face possible dismissal. Rather than allow this, the guard probably would take over the government, a move which Vallarino has so far rejected except as a last resort.

The Archbishop of Panama and several influential business and civic leaders are still trying to work out a compromise, but so far neither side is showing a willingness to give. Robles' aides, despite their difficulties last week, now see no need to compromise because they believe Arias has failed to whip up mass support for his cause. [REDACTED]

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11 Mar 68

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Poland: The antiregime student demonstrations in Warsaw may spread to other elements of the population.

For the second day Warsaw students calling for "freedom and democracy" clashed violently with police on 9 March. There is no evidence at present that the demonstrators are organized, nor have other elements of the population openly joined in the students' support of dissident writers who sparked the current crisis. Warsaw citizens witnessing the rioting, however, reportedly have displayed sympathy with the students, and remonstrated with police for taking forceful measures.

Further rioting could thus bring widened popular involvement over issues unrelated to the cause of the intellectuals.

There is no evidence that the students have been directly influenced to action by developments in Czechoslovakia, but they--like Polish writers--reportedly have been emboldened by the current liberal trend there.

The Gomulka regime is seeking to contain the Warsaw outbreaks, but rising factionalism within the higher echelons of the party may limit the effectiveness of its efforts to do so. There is evidence that some of the contending factions may be fanning the unrest in an attempt to improve their relative political positions in anticipation of the party congress scheduled later this year. [REDACTED]

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11 Mar 68

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