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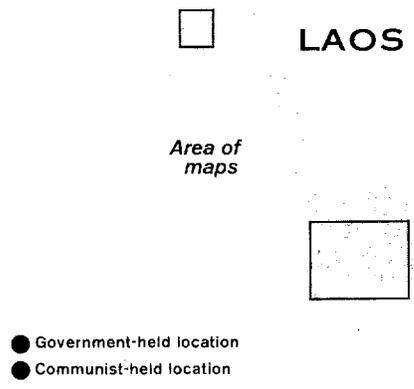
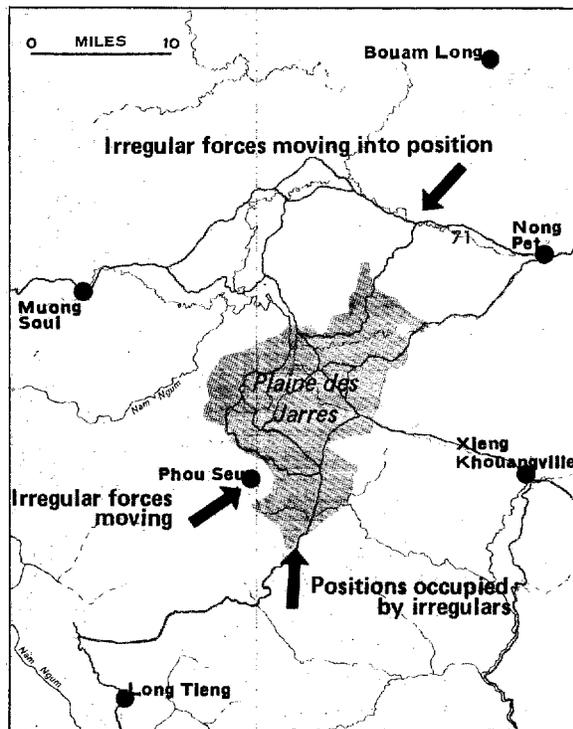
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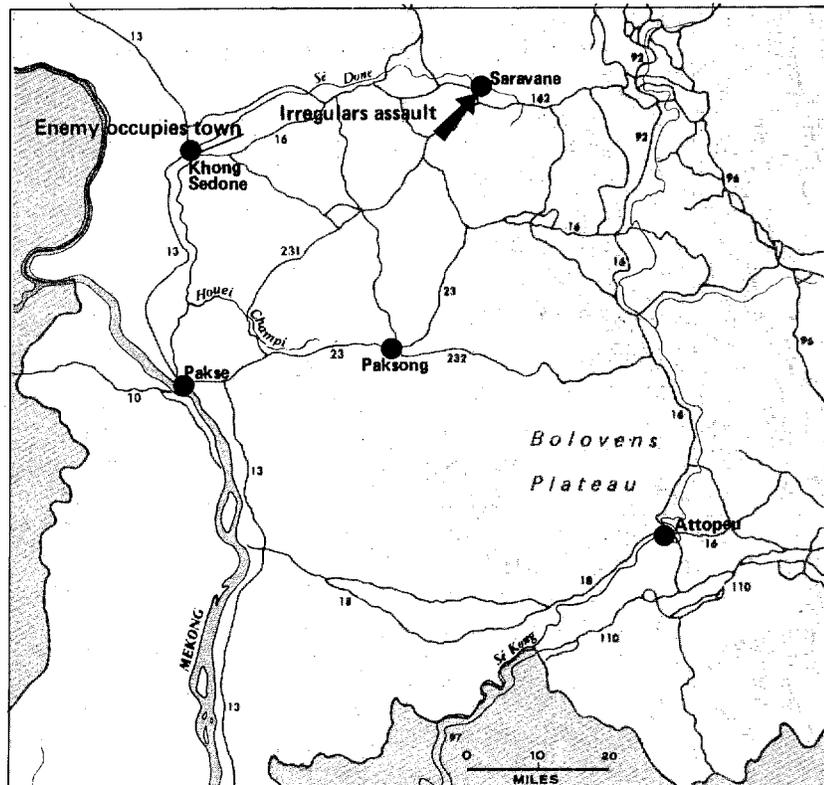
LAOS: The government will focus on political differences between Vientiane and the Lao Communists at today's peace talks. (Page 1)

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LAOS: The government's presentation at the second session of peace talks scheduled for today will focus on fundamental political differences between Vientiane and the Lao Communists.

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[redacted] government spokesman Pheng Phongsavan will present a seven-point peace program in rebuttal to the Communists' five-point plan offered at the first session on 17 October. It reiterates the government's long-standing position that the proper basis for a Laotian settlement is renewal of Communist participation in the coalition structure created by the 1962 Geneva Accords. In their presentation of 17 October the Communists proposed that a provisional "political council" replace the existing National Assembly and that eventually a new coalition government be created. Despite the seeming impasse, ample opportunity remains for exploratory negotiations. A member of the Communist delegation has told a ranking US diplomat that the talks will require flexibility on both sides and that the government's negotiating team is considering holding out the possibility of expanded Communist participation in the existing coalition structure.



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Today's talks take place against a background of fresh efforts by both sides to expand the territory under their control. In the south, jittery government forces abandoned their Khong Sedone garrisons over the weekend amid reports of an imminent enemy assault. North Vietnamese troops attacked the retreating government forces some four miles south of the town. Although the town is still in

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enemy hands, government forces have regrouped and are attempting to push back into the area in the face of stiff enemy resistance. To the east, government irregulars have moved into the provincial capital of Saravane but have not yet secured the entire area.

In the north, government forces are once more closing in on the Plaine des Jarres from three directions. Forward elements of Vang Pao's irregulars have moved back into the southern tip of the Plaine against light enemy resistance, while to the north, other irregulars have reached the high ground overlooking Route 71, an important Communist logistical area.

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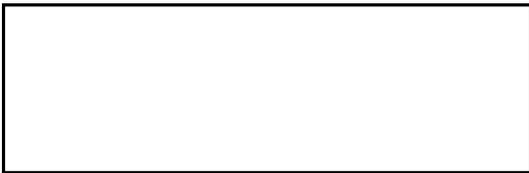
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