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BANGLADESH

Prime Minister Mujib decreed a state of emergency on December 28 in an effort to increase his government's ability to cope with the severe difficulties plaguing the country. He may be planning additional moves to tighten his control.

Under the emergency decree, the government's powers of arrest and detention are now broader and civil rights are suspended. According to the decree, the state of emergency was declared because "the security and economic life of Bangladesh have been threatened by internal disturbances." Mujib told newsmen over the weekend that the decree was only a first step and that he may take further action.

Local contacts of the US embassy in Dacca believe the decree may have been triggered by the murders late last week of several members of Mujib's Awami League, including a member of parliament.

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Mujib has, for some time, been considering a shift to a presidential system to increase his power to deal with the severe economic difficulties, corruption, and political and criminal violence that have been prevalent since Bangladesh became independent three years ago. Leading members of his party have opposed such a shift, however, for fear that their own power would be reduced. While Mujib's current intentions regarding a presidential system are unclear, the embassy reports

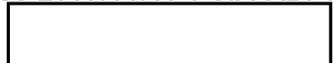
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that he seems increasingly interested in moving toward a more authoritarian system and that the emergency decree appears to be part of a trend in that direction.

Thus far, the public appears to be reacting calmly. Military and paramilitary forces have been moved into key positions to maintain order.

The emergency declaration is unlikely to bring about major progress toward solving Bangladesh's deep-seated economic and social problems. It could, however, temporarily mollify some of the government's military and civilian critics, whose ranks have been expanding. The fragmented leftist political opposition may try to mount a protest campaign, but antigovernment military officers--whose support would be necessary for any serious move against the regime--seem likely to lie low for a while.



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NICARAGUA

Nicaraguan President Somoza has agreed to the principal demands of terrorists who are holding about a dozen hostages in Managua.

Somoza has guaranteed the terrorists safe passage to Cuba, will pay them a ransom of at least \$1 million, and will release a number of their imprisoned colleagues--members of the Sandinist National Liberation Front. Preparations reportedly are being made for a flight to Havana early today.

The President has a well-known record of dealing harshly with extremists. This time, he was left with almost no room for maneuver after a well-armed band stormed a suburban Managua home Friday during a reception attended by a number of Nicaraguan luminaries.

Some of Somoza's closest associates and two relatives are among the hostages including his brother-in-law--Ambassador Guillermo Sevilla-Sacasa, dean of the diplomatic corps in Washington--a cousin, Nicaragua's foreign minister, the mayor of Managua, and the ambassador to the UN. A US citizen and the Chilean ambassador are also among the captives.

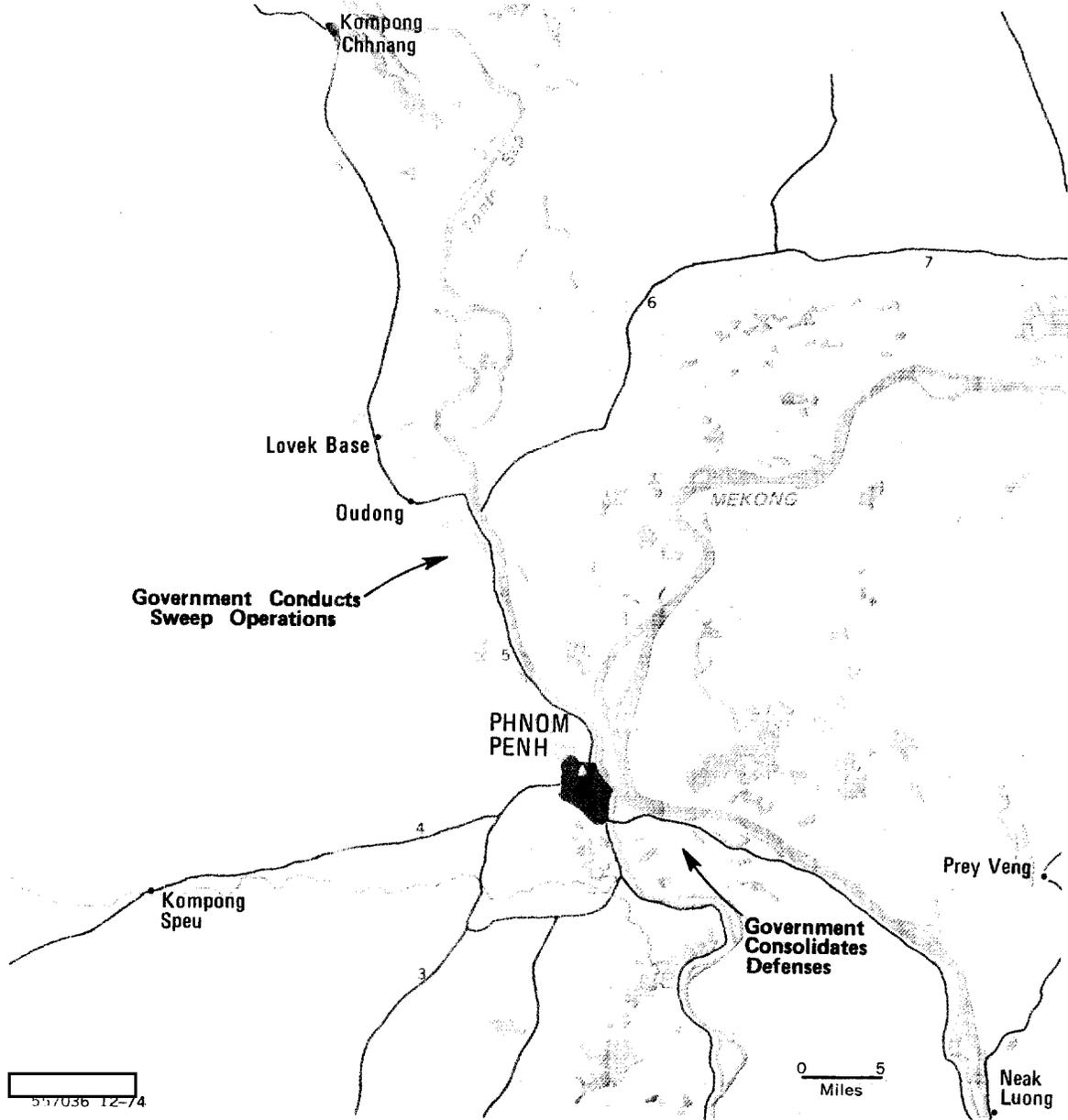
The Sandinist group is small and, after repeated losses to government security forces in recent years, most of its members were in jail or exile. The affair over the weekend was its most spectacular challenge to Somoza's authority since it began sporadic acts of violence in the early 1960s. It could help to improve the Sandinists' fortunes.

Somoza's fears for his interests and his personal safety will be heightened by the incident. He is already concerned because of outspoken opposition this year from church and labor groups to his family's political and economic hegemony.

Somoza, after beginning a six-year presidential term on December 1 with promises for less repressive government, now will probably decide to undertake a stern campaign against his leftist opponents.

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CAMBODIA: Phnom Penh Area



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CAMBODIA

Government operations are meeting light resistance as Khmer Communist forces redeploy, rest, and refit in preparation for their coming dry season campaign.

Northwest of Phnom Penh, the Cambodian army has launched an operation to clear the area south of Oudong. No significant contact has been reported thus far, [redacted]

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[redacted]

Southeast of the capital, government forces operating along the east bank of the Bassac River continue to recapture terrain and consolidate defenses. Light enemy resistance indicates that the Communists have probably begun shifting their forces to the lower Mekong area for dry season attacks on government shipping. [redacted]

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[redacted]

THAILAND

The government's quick action in expelling former prime minister Thanom Kittikachorn from Thailand reduces the danger of serious political disorder in Bangkok. Thanom, who had returned unexpectedly from exile in the US, flew to Singapore with his family yesterday, only two days after his arrival in Bangkok. The Singapore government has agreed to allow Thanom to stay temporarily.

Thai students began staging protest demonstrations in Bangkok over the weekend, accusing the government of complicity in Thanom's return. The students seem uncertain, however, over how to exploit the issue. Some student leaders are likely to try to prolong the protests but, with Thanom out of the country, they probably will have trouble keeping the issue alive for long. [redacted]

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[redacted]

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