

The President's Daily Brief

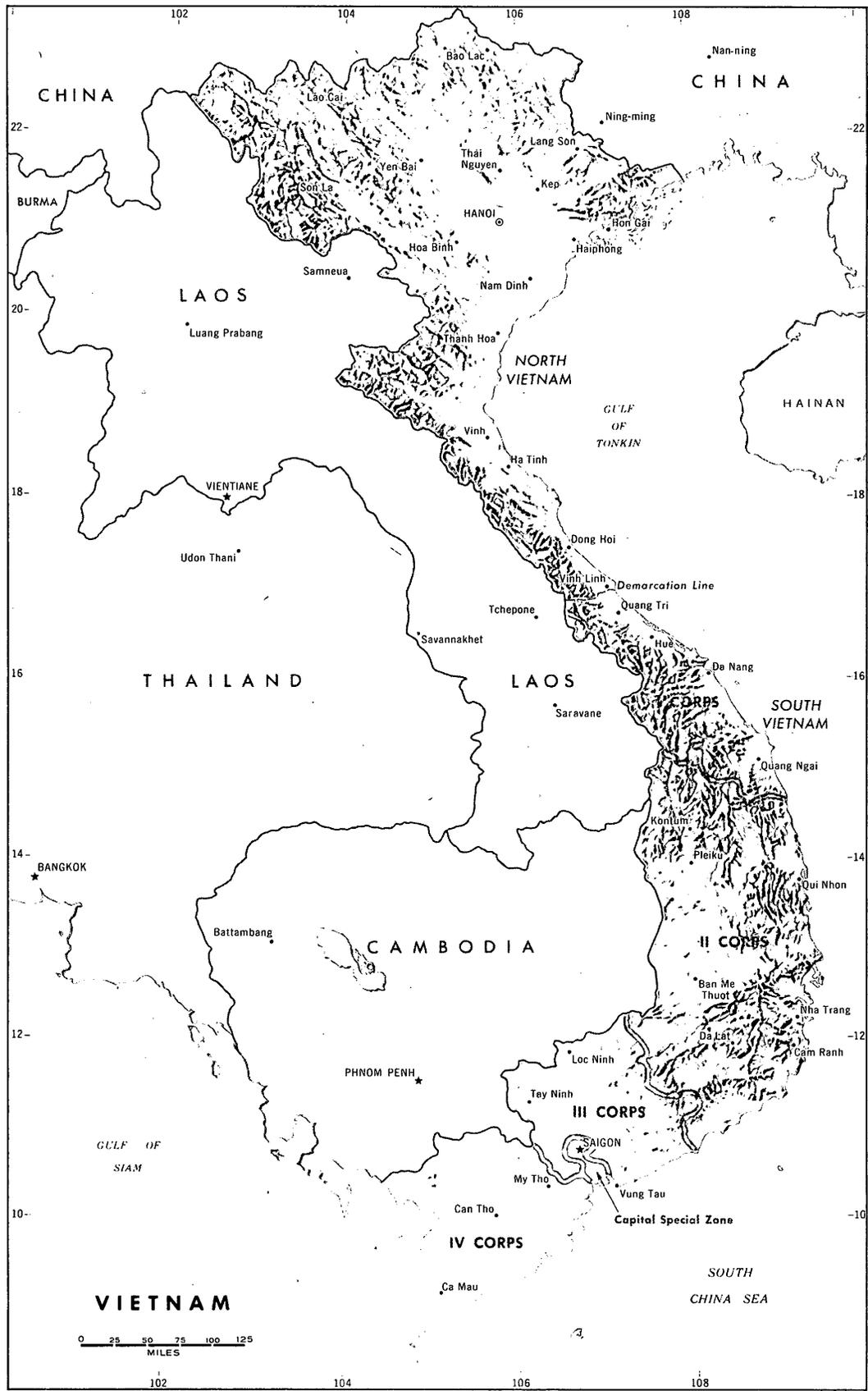
11 March 1969

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LATE NOTES FOR THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

11 MARCH 69



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12 March 1969

LATE NOTES FOR THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF OF
11 MARCH 1969

I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

VIETNAM

Signs that [redacted] Communist divisions in III Corps are in the final stages of preparation for ground attacks against allied installations, possibly including some in the Saigon area, have been noted recently.

There is evidence that the Viet Cong 9th Division has begun to move within southern Tay Ninh Province along its traditional approach route to the Saigon area. Prisoner reports suggest that other elements of the 9th may be moving southeast toward the Phu Tho racetrack in Saigon.

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Thieu announced four cabinet changes today including the appointment of General Tran Thien Khiem as deputy premier in charge of the pacification program. Khiem keeps his old post as interior minister. [redacted]

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MIDDLE EAST

There is nothing significant to report.

EUROPE

France began to get back to business quietly this morning after the one-day general strike.

SOVIET AFFAIRS

There is nothing significant to report.

II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

LAOS

Some 50 enemy troops attacked Luang Prabang airfield and the regional military headquarters there early today. Royal Laotian Army troops repulsed the attackers before they could occupy the airfield. Nine government soldiers were wounded and four killed. At least five aircraft were damaged or destroyed.

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PERU

At a press conference yesterday, Velasco confirmed that a US "envoy" will arrive shortly in Peru for talks. He said that the IPC issue could be discussed, however--"this has been definitely solved and is an irreversible step." He added that they could discuss the Hickenlooper Amendment but doubted that the US will use it. (FBIS 06)

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I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

VIETNAM

Action reported on 10-11 March included widespread shellings in all four Corps areas, and battalion-sized attacks on allied positions both in the delta and northwest of Tay Ninh city. Heavy pressure continues against special forces camps in the highlands, and enemy activity has picked up somewhat in the coastal lowlands of II Corps. Sensitive areas such as Hue, Da Nang, and Saigon were fairly quiet during the period.

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Statements from prisoners captured recently near Quang Tri city suggest Communist forces may launch an attack against the city soon. Moreover, there are continuing signs that Communist forces are moving southward in Quang Binh Province just north of the DMZ.

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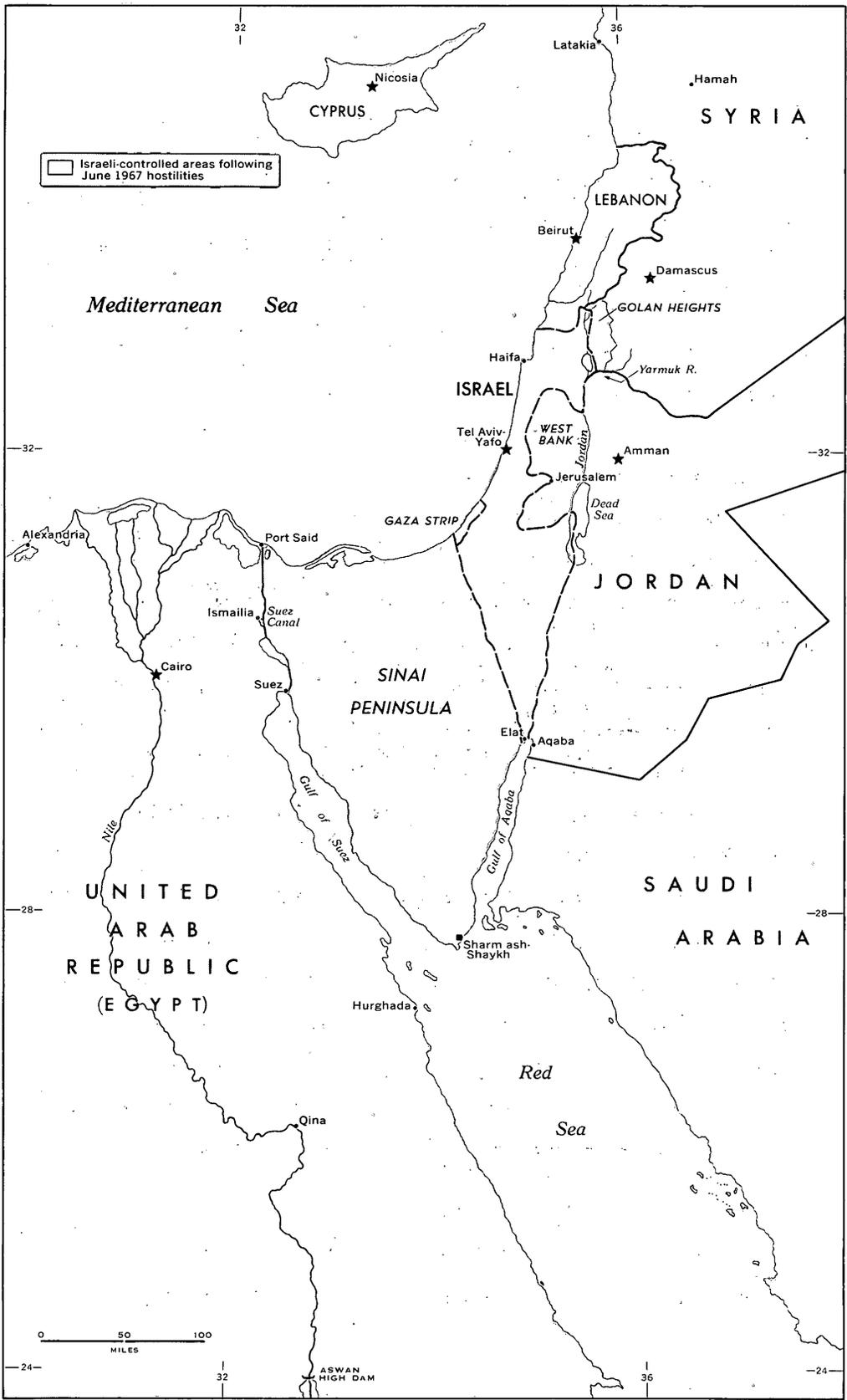
MIDDLE EAST

Another day of fighting along the Suez Canal today highlights the Egyptian interest in keeping the situation along that cease-fire line active.

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EUROPE

We detect little that is new in De Gaulle's speech this afternoon. He seems to have replayed many familiar themes: the antithesis between Gaullist "progress" and the "chaos" of the opposition, the advantages of "participation" which his reforms will encourage, the implication that his opponents are engaged in a conspiracy against France, the appeal to the populace to support him personally. There was little to excite either his opponents or his supporters. Those among the former who called today's general strike probably had a sense of deja vu as they pondered the speech; we do not think they will be able to use his remarks to whip up new momentum for the strike. Nor did De Gaulle produce many sparks in his appeal for a heavy "yes" vote in next month's referendum, although there is little doubt that the populace will duly approve the reforms he has proposed.

It is still too early to predict the course of the strike itself with any certainty, but we suspect most of the strikers will be back on the job in the next day or so. If they do go back to work, there seems little chance that the strike will have put much of a dent in the positions of either management or the government, notwithstanding the massive worker turnout today.

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SOVIET AFFAIRS

There is nothing significant to report.

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II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

PERU

The United States Intelligence Board has approved a Special National Intelligence Estimate on the consequences of the dispute between the US and Peru. In summary, it concludes that:

--The military regime in Peru will almost certainly not meet the requirements of US law for compensation of the International Petroleum Company. If all the forces now in train continue, the crisis with Peru will be a major one, and perhaps disastrous for Peru and US-Peruvian relations.

--The initial impact of the Hickenlooper and Sugar Act amendments themselves would not be severe, but if enforcement of the amendments indirectly caused a reduction of official and private foreign investment, the resulting economic strains could force the regime into drastic improvisations.

--Peruvian-US relations would deteriorate sharply if sanctions were applied. If President Velasco remains in office, he might even feel goaded into expropriating other US businesses and breaking diplomatic relations.

--Velasco's advisers come from all parts of the political spectrum; the leftists among them do not appear more influential than the others. All seem to be ultranationalistic and anti-American. If Velasco were replaced by more moderate generals, actions against the US might be less extreme, but no one could hold office

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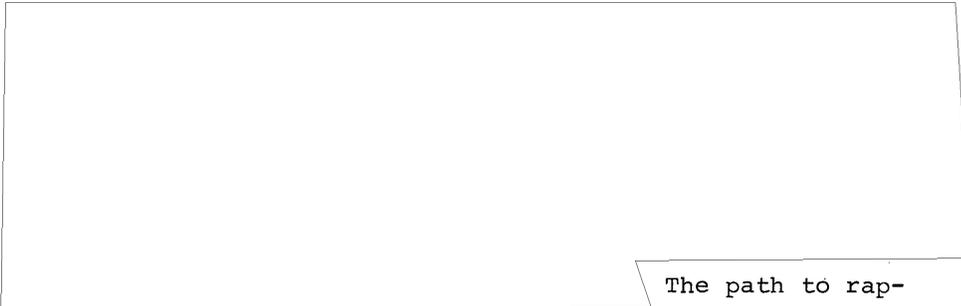
in Peru who failed to assert the country's independence of US influence.

--We doubt that Peru's recent moves to establish diplomatic economic ties with the Communist countries will produce a firm and close relationship.

--The dispute with the US may stimulate a general sharpening of resentments toward the US elsewhere in Latin America, especially in the economic sphere. As a protection against dependence on the US, other countries will probably try harder to broaden their foreign contacts and may care much less about how the US views their efforts.

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THAILAND-CAMBODIA



The path to rapprochement is still a difficult one, however, in view of the many political differences and personal animosities to be resolved.

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For Sihanouk, initiatives toward Thailand are only part of a broader adjustment to the post-war situation he anticipates. In addition to softening his attitude toward the US

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Sihanouk has also put out feelers to the Laos government, which is now considering recognition of the Lao-Cambodian border. So far, however, Sihanouk has given no indication that he intends to make any gesture toward the government in Saigon, a sign that he still doubts that it will survive the war.

SOVIET UNION - COMMUNIST CHINA

Both sides continue to exploit the border clash of 2 March, each unwilling to abandon the propaganda field to the other. Soviet media are maintaining the high level of attack begun last Friday, although there have been no further demonstrations against the Chinese Embassy in Moscow since 8 March. Tightly controlled demonstrations were resumed in front of the Soviet Embassy in Peking today to counter the demonstrations in Moscow over the weekend.

The Soviets are charging that Peking staged the shooting incident both to discomfit Moscow internationally and to unify a badly fragmented Chinese populace. One Soviet publication has used the incident to stress that the Russians are beleaguered "from New York to Peking" and to call for increased vigilance by the Soviet populace. The Soviets are, however, avoiding specifics about the border areas that have been disputed for a long time.

There are signs that both the Soviet and Chinese military forces have been devoting increased attention to the

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area of the border clash. Soviet helicopters and reconnaissance aircraft are flying several missions a day along the Ussuri River. Soviet reconnaissance flights, which were increased in mid-February along all of China's northern border, were further intensified after the incident.

So far, we have detected no troop movements of any consequence on either side.

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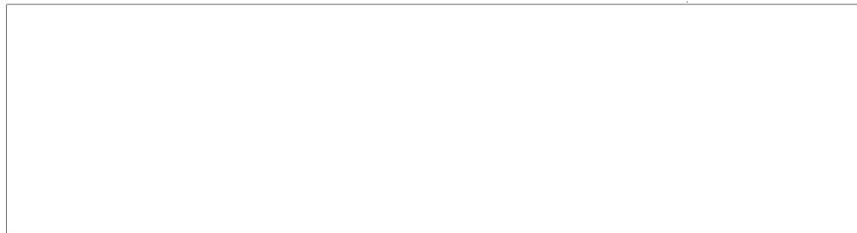
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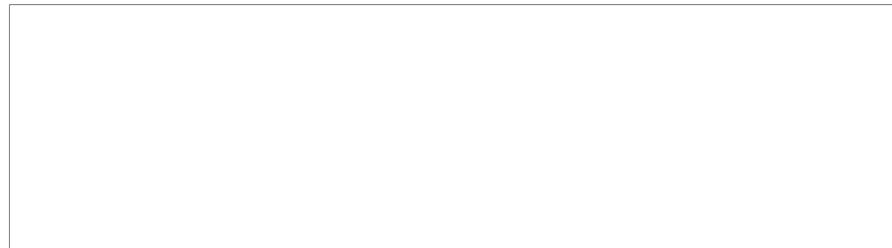
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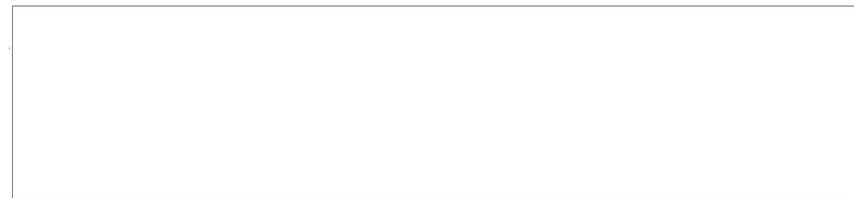
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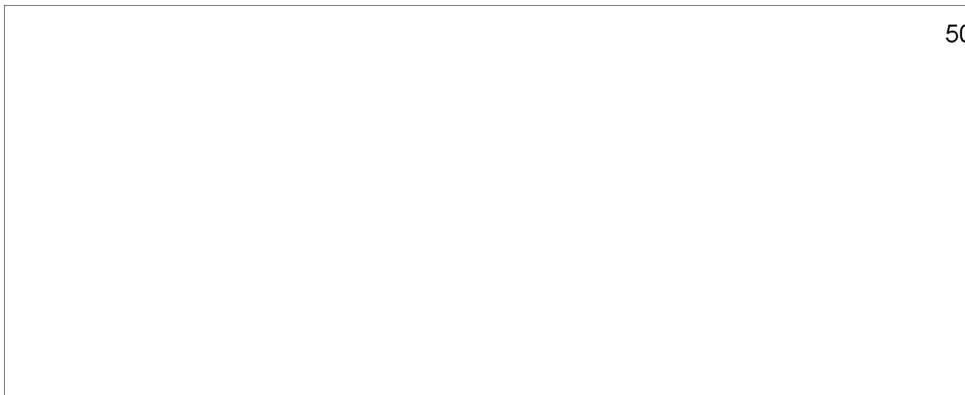
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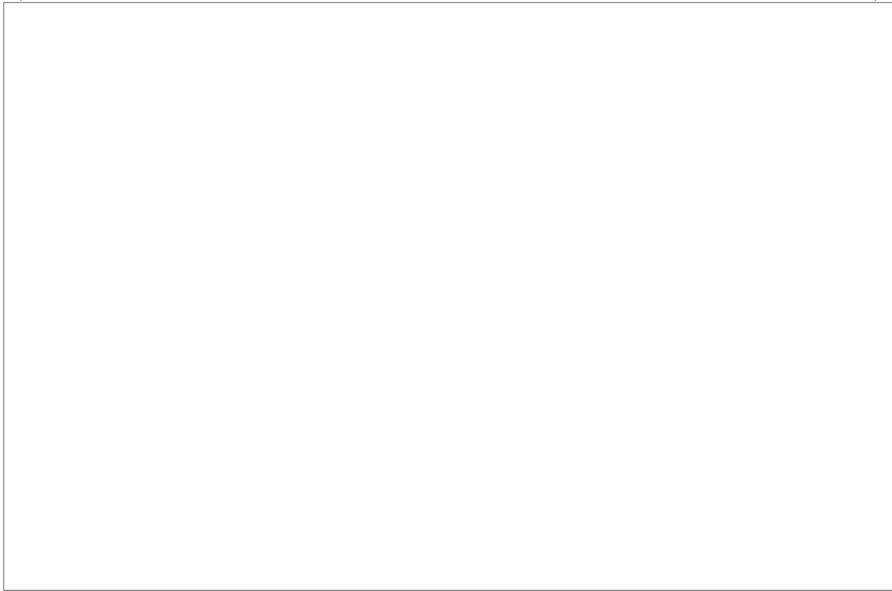
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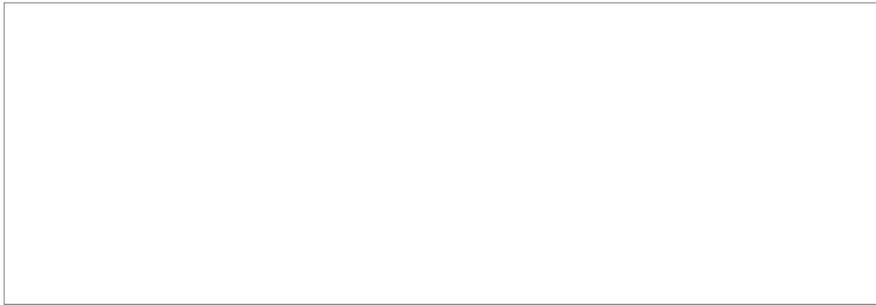
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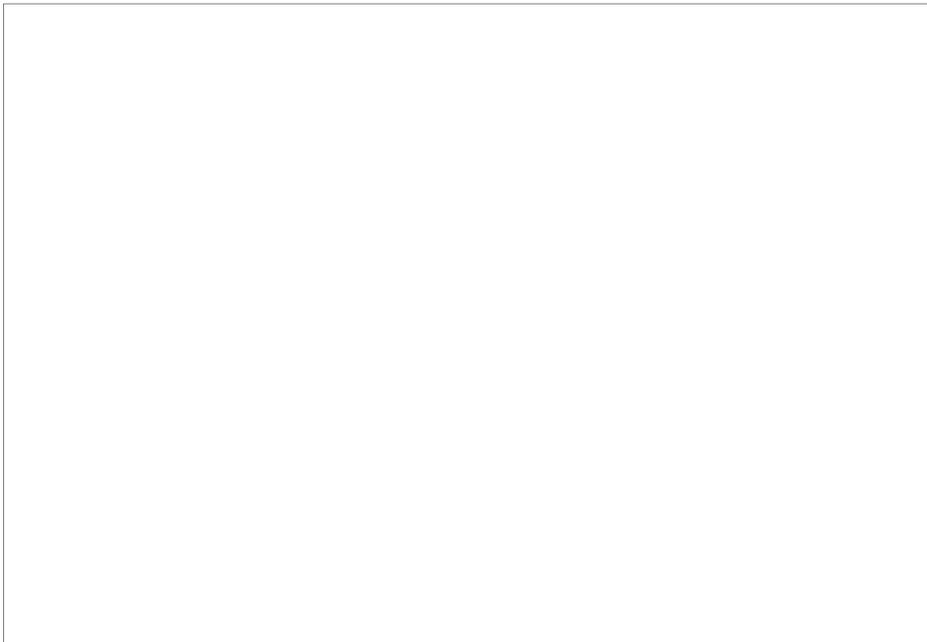
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