

The President's Daily Brief

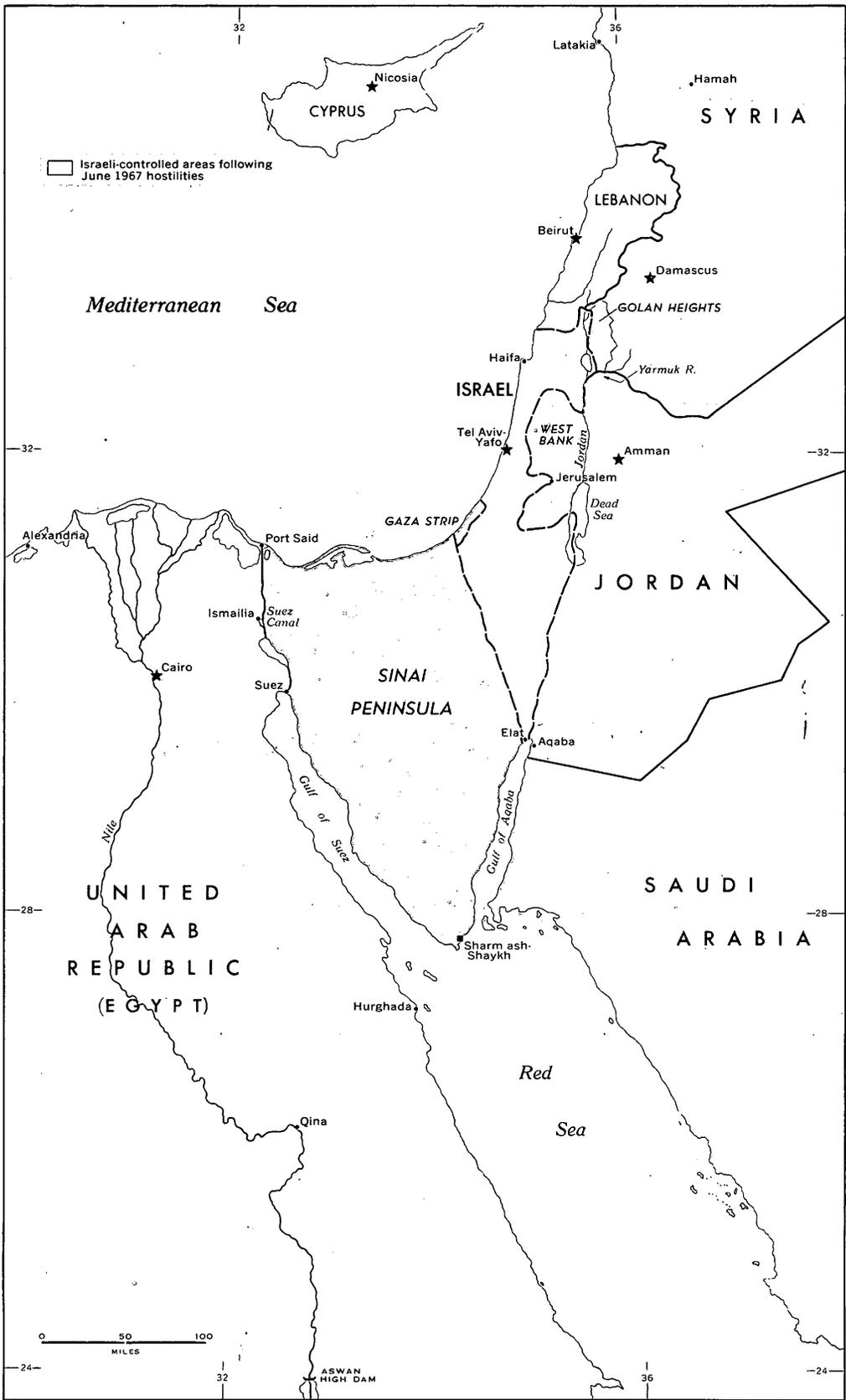
27 March 1969

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LATE NOTES FOR THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF OF 27 MARCH 1969

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

28 March 1969

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

I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

SOVIET AFFAIRS

The deputy leader of the Soviet delegation to the ENDC has told a member of our delegation that Moscow has not yet decided whether to ratify the NPT before the Bonn government signs but that he personally thought his government would follow a "cautious policy of waiting" for the West German signature. He admitted this was inconsistent with the Soviet appeal for an early entry into force of the NPT, but said "many elements in Moscow are not flexible when it comes to West Germany."

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There is nothing significant to report on any other area.

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I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

MIDDLE EAST

The pattern of Israeli air attacks on Jordan over the past two weeks indicates that the Israelis have adopted a policy of "preventive" attacks on Arab commando bases and concentrations. The objective is apparently to keep the Arab guerrillas on the move, to interfere with training, break morale, and make terrorist activity generally more difficult.

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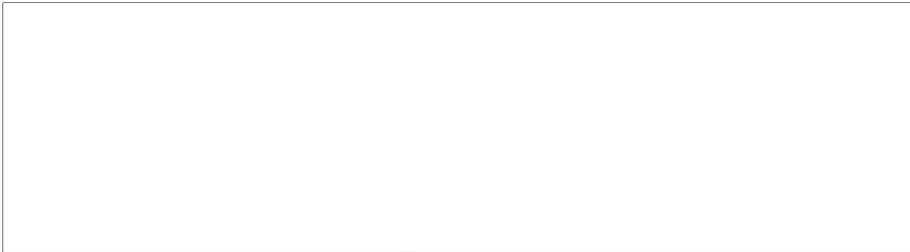
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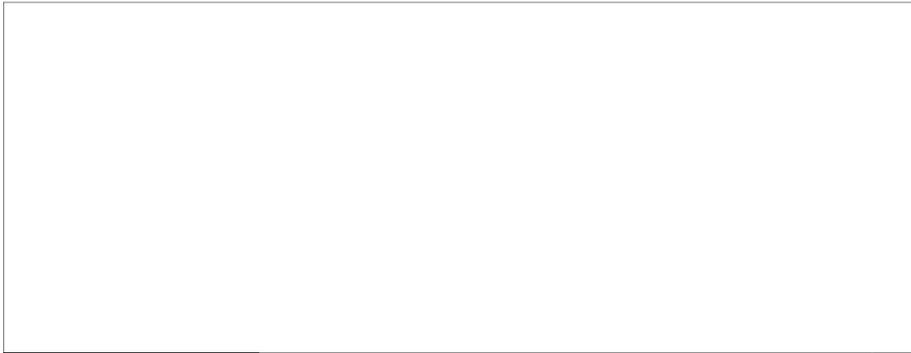
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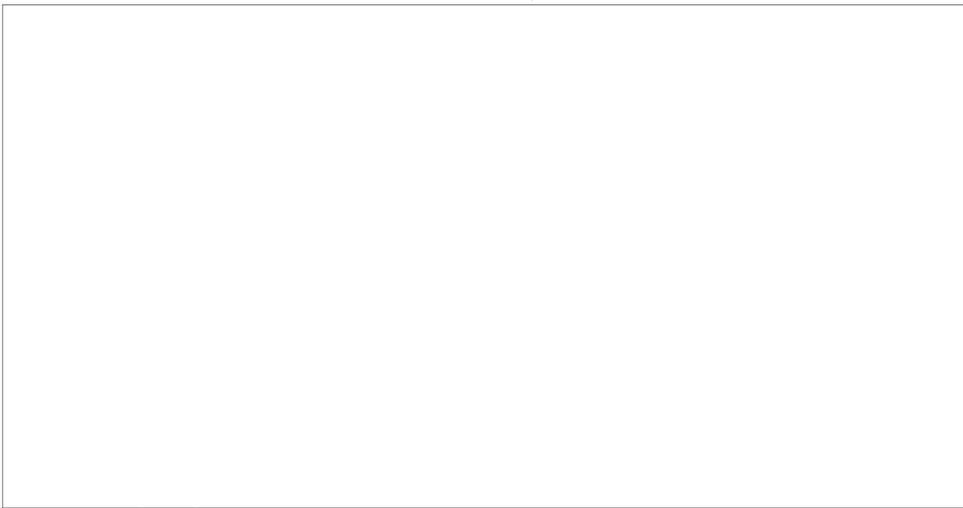


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SOVIET AFFAIRS

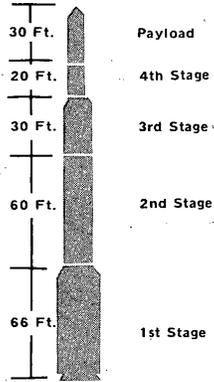


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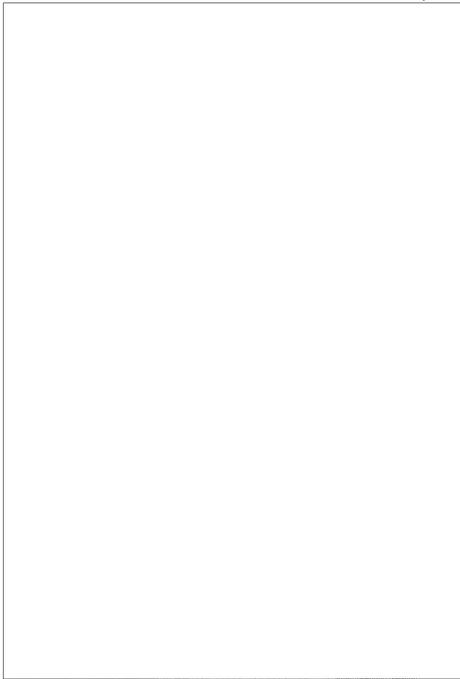
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Failure of Large Booster Deals Setback to Soviet Space Program



SOVIET SL-12

Lift off thrust 2.5 million lbs
 Earth orbit payload 45,000
 (pounds)
 Payload on lunar trajectory 13,000
 (pounds)



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SOVIET SL-12 RECORD

DATE	EVENT	RESULT
10 March 1967	Cosmos 146	Partial failure
8 April 1967	Cosmos 154	Partial failure
22 November 1967	Circumlunar attempt	Failure
2 March 1968	Zond 4 simulated circumlunar mission	Success
22 April 1968	Circumlunar attempt	Failure
14 September 1968	Zond 5 circumlunar mission	Success
10 November 1968	Zond 6 circumlunar mission	Success
16 November 1968	Proton 4	Success
20 January 1969	Circumlunar attempt	Failure
27 March 1969	Attempted Mars probe	Failure



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The Soviet space program suffered a major setback yesterday when its largest operational booster--the SL-12--failed during an attempt to launch a probe toward Mars.

The Soviets probably intend the SL-12 to be the workhorse for their space program in the 1970s, but it has been plagued with problems throughout its development, having fully performed its mission only four times in ten attempts.



So far, the SL-12 has been used primarily in the circumlunar program--this latest attempt was the first time it has been tried in the planetary exploration effort. Its poor performance probably is the principal reason that the Soviet circumlunar program is at least one year behind schedule; this denied Moscow the opportunity to attempt a manned circumlunar flight before the US Apollo 8.

Apart from its effect on the space effort, the dismal record of the SL-12 seems likely to have caused considerable disappointment within the Soviet hierarchy. This could, in turn, arouse questions, and attendant political controversy, about the allocation of scarce resources.

VIETNAM

The Liberation Front has turned aside Thieu's public bid for private talks with the Front, but has not rejected the idea outright. The response was negative in tone and shot through with propaganda attacks, but it carefully

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avoided closing the door to the possibility of such a dialogue.

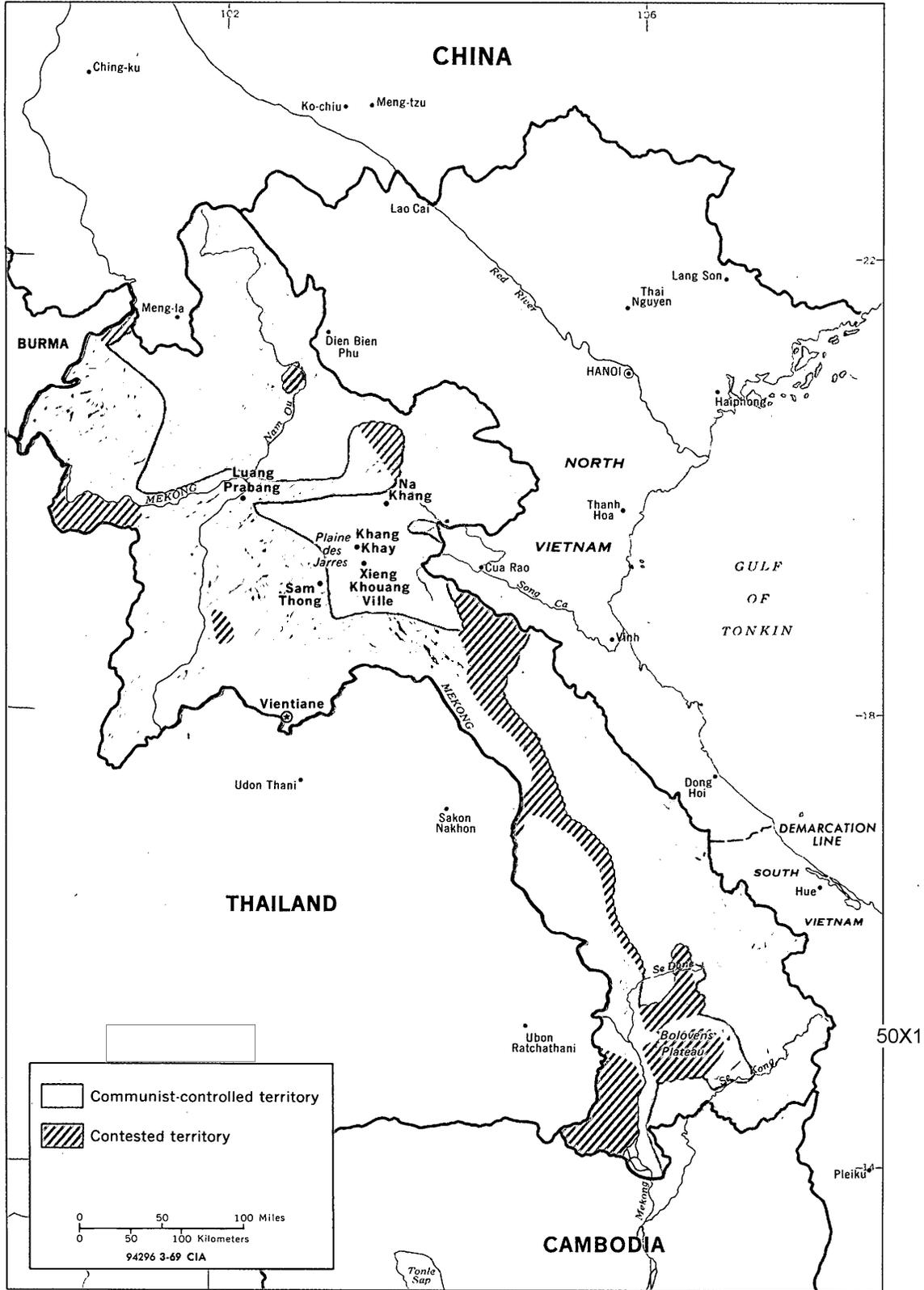
For example, after attacking both the US and the GVN, the Liberation Front statement went on to assert that the Front delegation came to Paris with the "serious intention of helping, with the other sides, the conference to achieve positive results." Of even more significance is the Front's failure explicitly to refuse Thieu's offer.

The Communists clearly realize that Thieu's statement has put them on the spot. They almost certainly consider it to have been a clever propaganda move, and their reply was aimed at attempting to counter Thieu's success. At the same time, the Communists wanted to avoid locking themselves into a totally negative position. The Communists realize they will eventually have to deal with the Thieu government, and they do not want to close out any options on the form such meetings will take.

EUROPE

There is nothing significant to report.

LAOS



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II. OTHER IMPORANT DEVELOPMENTS

LAOS

Souvanna has now asked US officials for air strikes against Communist centers in the Plaine des Jarres area that previously have been relatively immune from attacks. Bombing restrictions have been lifted from military targets in and around Xieng Khouang Ville and the eastern portion of

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The request to hit these prime Communist bases followed a gloomy cabinet meeting yesterday on the enemy threat in the northeast. There has in fact been little change in the situation since our last review in the Brief of Monday afternoon. One more government position has changed hands--we suspect through withdrawal rather than enemy action--and there is still the possibility of a Communist thrust against friendly guerrilla headquarters at Sam Thong.

BRAZIL

The long-pending deal for Brazil to purchase two British submarines appears to be nearing conclusion.

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Last August the Brazilian foreign minister was told by the US ambassador that if Brazil bought new submarines, it would risk incurring penalties under the Conte Amendment. The warning was received calmly.

Application of penalties would probably strengthen the hand of those nationalists in the military who have advised the government to assume a more neutral posture in world affairs. Moreover, the Brazilians would probably not be dissuaded from making whatever military equipment purchases they thought were necessary.

IRAQ - EAST GERMANY

There are rumors that Iraq will soon recognize East Germany; it would be the first non-Communist state to do so. If the East Germans get recognition, they undoubtedly will step up their pressures on other Arab states.

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