



The President's Daily Brief

10 April 1969

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11 April 1969

LATE NOTES FOR THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF OF
10 APRIL 1969

I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

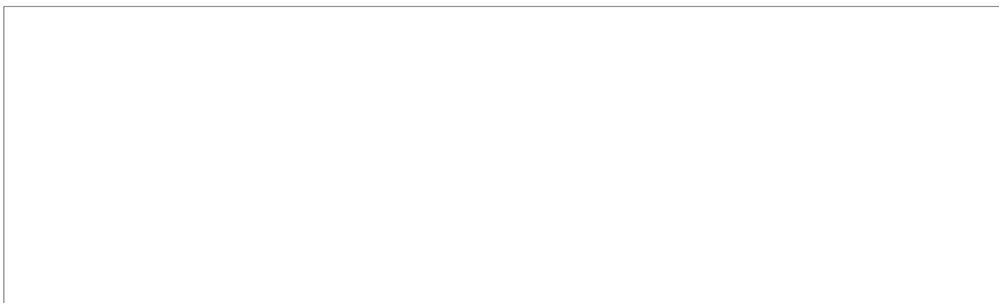
VIETNAM

Hardest hit in last night's round of intensified Communist shellings were Tay Ninh City and the delta town of Vinh Long. In Vinh Long, 25 rounds of 82-mm. mortar fire fell, killing 15 and wounding 98. Just northeast of Tay Ninh, allied military compounds received eight rounds of 82-mm. mortar fire and two 107-mm. rockets. Secondary explosions from ammunition dumps hit during the brief attack contributed to an impression that considerably more rounds of enemy fire landed than was actually the case.

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EUROPE

Widespread indifference as reflected in recent polls to the referendum scheduled for 27 April was probably behind De Gaulle's threat to resign in his recent taped interview. Despite an intensified government publicity campaign, the most recent poll showed 52 percent either had no opinion or have not yet decided how they will vote. Only 25 percent said they intended to vote yes, while 23 percent plan to vote no. The poll also

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indicated that most of those who had decided how to vote were more interested in registering their opinion on De Gaulle's leadership than on the merits of regional and senatorial reforms.

The General probably thought it was a safe bet to try to turn the referendum into another confidence vote in his leadership since the same polls showed 54 percent satisfied with his performance as President as opposed to 34 percent who were dissatisfied. (Central Intelligence Bulletin, 11 Apr)

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There is nothing significant to report in other areas.

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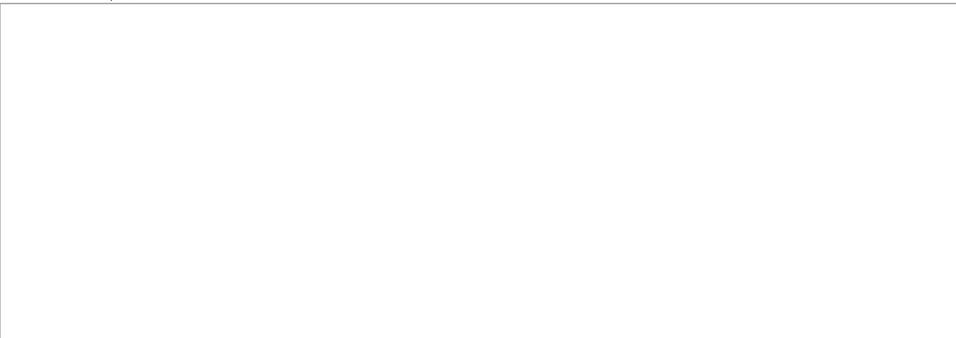
I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

VIETNAM

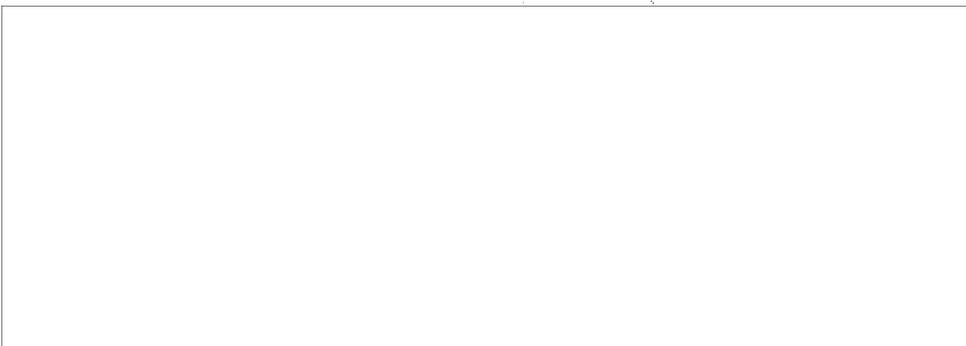
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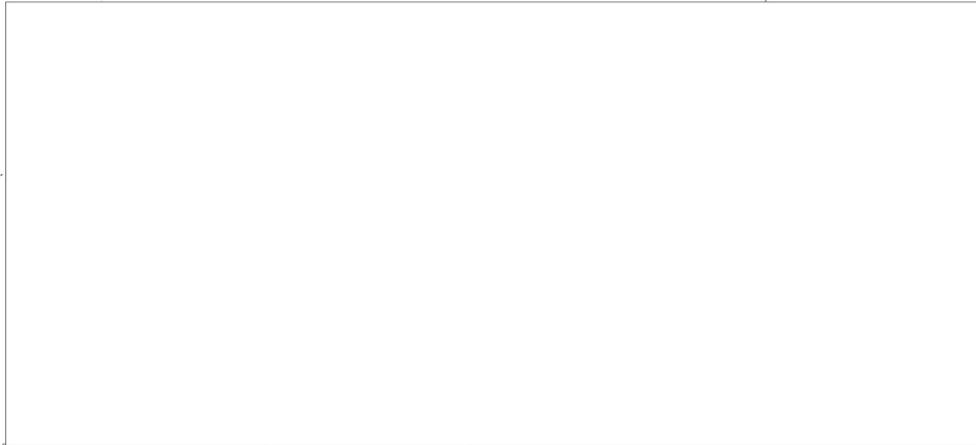
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EUROPE

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MIDDLE EAST

We see little significant movement in Israeli UN delegate Tekoah's assertion yesterday that the substance rather than the label was what mattered in any contractual arrangement between the Israelis and the Arabs. Tekoah was implying that perhaps the term "peace treaty" could be avoided, but we think the Arabs would regard Tekoah's formulation as a distinction without a difference.

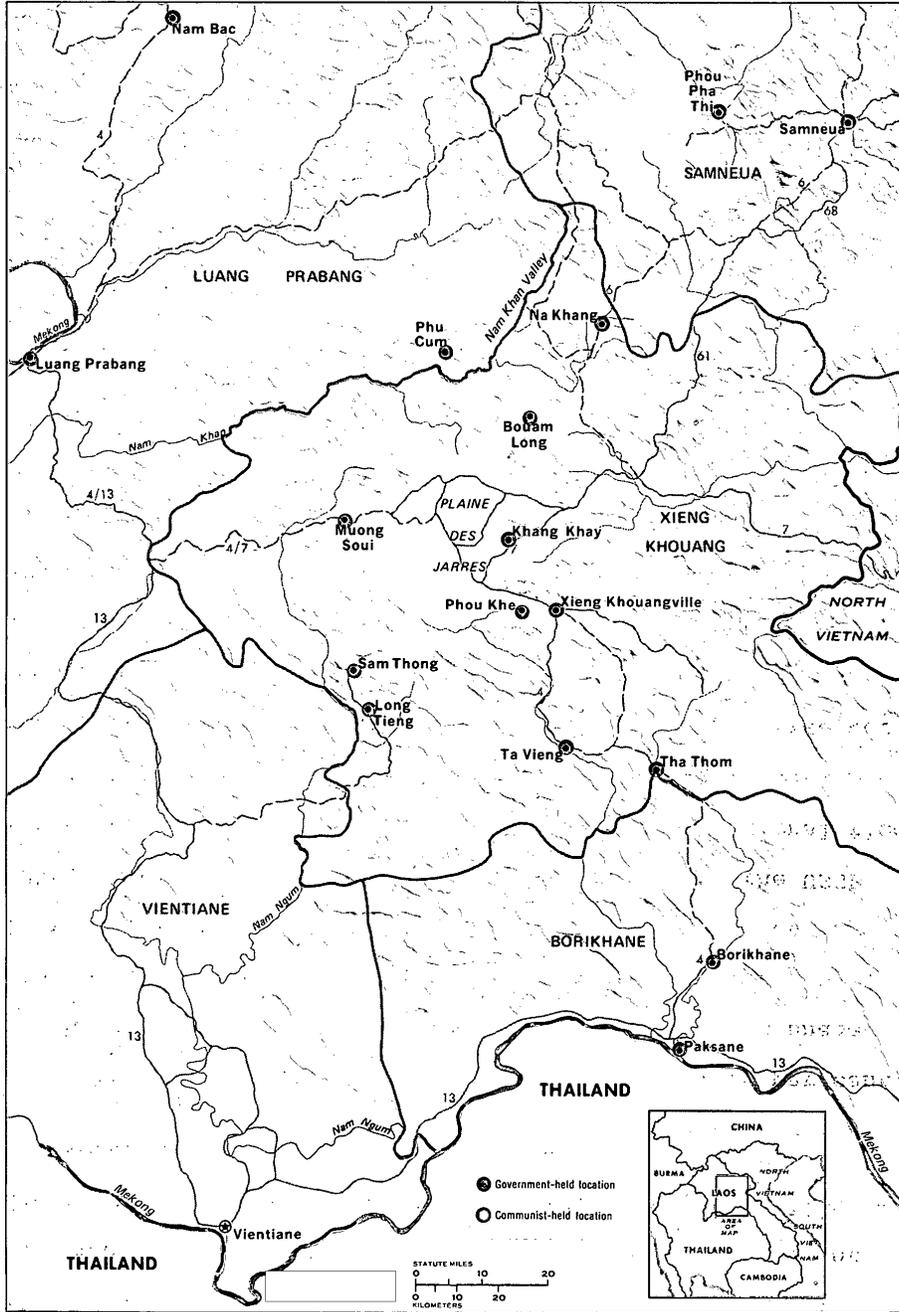
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SOVIET AFFAIRS

Soviet Merchant Marine Minister Bakayev recently said that Moscow's merchant fleet would grow by more than fifty per cent during the years 1970-75. At present the Soviet fleet includes some 1,200 ships, totaling 10-1/2 million deadweight tons.

While the Soviet fleet may increase by fifty per cent, we think it unlikely that Moscow will achieve its tonnage goal of 13 million deadweight tons by the end of the current Five-Year Plan in 1970, and 17 million deadweight tons by 1975. Even if the 1975 Plan goal were achieved, the USSR would move no higher than fifth in the rank of national fleets (it is now seventh). At any rate, the continued expansion of the Soviet fleet does not pose a serious threat to free world shipping.

LAOS: Current Situation



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II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

LAOS

Government troops in the northeast have recently moved into positions just south of Route 4 and are now interdicting Communist troop and supply convoys moving south of Xieng Khouangville. Reinforcements have also been brought into Phou Khe, captured by the government two weeks ago, and an effort is under way to drive the enemy from positions to the south. The ease with which the operation has progressed has greatly improved the morale of General Vang Pao's forces.

The absence of a sharp enemy response to these moves--probably in part a result of the intensive air campaign mounted against the Plaine des Jarres--may be short-lived. Intercepts indicate that a North Vietnamese battalion is preparing to move against Phou Khe. Moreover, government troops preparing to attack southwestern portions of the Plaine are likely to encounter stiff resistance because of the large concentration of Communist forces in that area.

Government harassing operations south of the Plaine have not appreciably eased enemy pressure to the north. Communist forces have probed the government's newly reoccupied base at Phu Cum and have continued to shell government troops at Bouam Long. No major enemy push has developed so far.

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In southern Laos, the government has moved fresh troops and supplies onto a high point overlooking the recently abandoned Thateng base.



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