



The President's Daily Brief

8 August 1969

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I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

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SOVIET AFFAIRS

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Soviet propagandists are doing a bit more saber-rattling than usual in their current anti-Mao campaign. Wednesday's issue of the military newspaper Red Star carried a belligerent article by Col. Gen. Vladimir Tolubko, the new commander of the Far East Military District. The article lauds the exploits of the Soviet Far Eastern army which defeated "Chinese militarists" 40 years ago. The heroes of 1929 are compared to the "heroes of Damansky Island," the site of the border clash in

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March. The article warns the Chinese that "who comes to us with the sword will perish by it."

There is no obvious reason why the article was printed at this particular time. It did serve, however, to publicize Tolubko's accession to his new command in a dramatic way, and the Chinese are surely aware that he is the former number two man of the Soviet Strategic Missile Forces.

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Recent satellite photography has uncovered another group of six silos under construction for the SS-9 ICBM. Construction on this group began last spring at an existing ICBM complex.

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II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

IRAQ

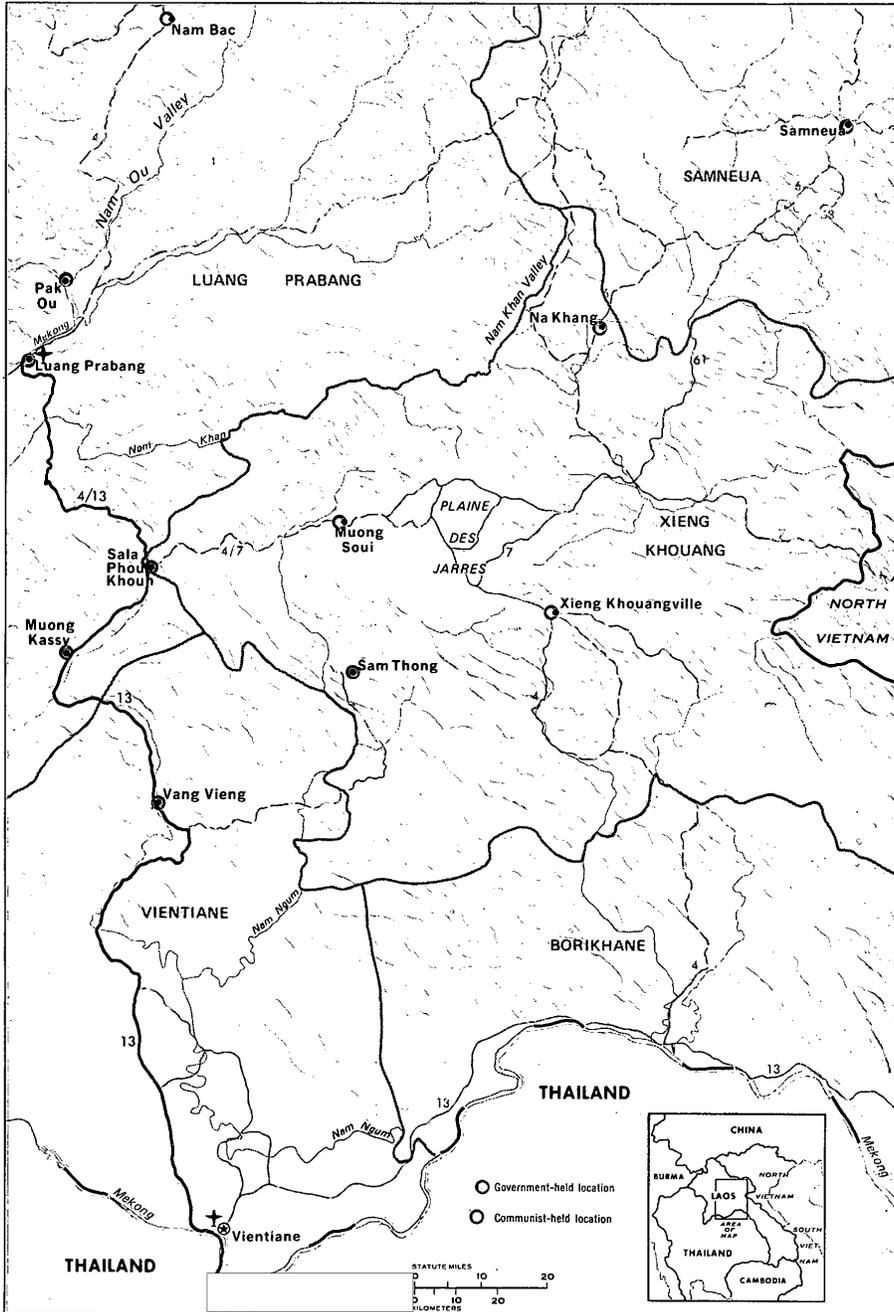
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The Military Situation Continues to be Quiet in Laos



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LAOS

The military situation is still quiet, but there are some signs that the Communists may become more active west of the Plaine des Jarres between Luang Prabang and Vientiane. [redacted] 50X1

[redacted] Pathet Lao elements north of the road junction at Sala Phou Khoun are moving to attack a number of government posts strung along Route 13. These same sources claim the Communists also intend to hit Luang Prabang airfield--an easy target which has frequently been attacked in the past. 50X1

South of the road junction, [redacted] reports have it that the Pathet Lao are planning an early attack against the neutralist base at Vang Vieng with the help of North Vietnamese troops from the Muong Soui area. [redacted] these reports also claim the Communists intend to hit Vientiane airfield. [redacted] 50X1

Communists may not be bluffing this time; an attack on the outskirts of Vientiane would have a highly unsettling effect on an already jittery Lao leadership.

Meo leader Vang Pao, meanwhile, has launched an offensive east of the Plaine des Jarres in an attempt to cut Communist supply lines. This move, along with a series of planned attacks against enemy positions along the southern edge of the Plaine, is designed to prevent the Communists from pressing their attacks beyond Muong Soui. Vang Pao's plans call for the commitment of substantial numbers of troops who have been defending the bases north and south of the Plaine, thus making those bases somewhat more vulnerable.

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CAMBODIA

Sihanouk's reluctance to delegate real authority is making it hard for him to find a new prime minister. General Lon Nol, his first choice, tried to beg off, but--presumably after some princely arm-twisting--has now agreed to have a go at forming a cabinet. Lon Nol had run afoul of Sihanouk during an earlier stint as prime minister, and has probably been angling for assurances that he will enjoy a relatively free hand this time.

Waiting in the wings in the event that Sihanouk and Lon Nol can't work things out is Prince Norodom Kantol, another former prime minister whose chief asset is unquestioned subservience to Sihanouk.

PERU

Although President Velasco has rejected IPC's appeal for reduction or cancellation of its alleged debt to the government, Foreign Minister Mercado has assured the US chargé that Peru intends to "keep the doors open in substance and not just in form" for future efforts toward settlement. In his announcement on 6 August, the President said the case would have to be settled in court. All parties to the dispute are now awaiting Ambassador Irwin's return to Lima to renew talks on the IPC problem and, probably, other issues.

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EL SALVADOR - HONDURAS

Salvadoran radio and press commentators continue to crow about their "military and diplomatic victory," and the government has refused to return Honduran prisoners of war. The POW's are being held until Honduran authorities release an estimated 11,000 Salvadoran civilians detained during the hostilities. Public resentment against El Salvador is so great, however, that Honduran officials fear the detainees may become victims of violence if turned loose. If the Hondurans are prodded into violence against the resident Salvadorans, the government of El Salvador could again succumb to pressure from the same firebrands who pushed it into the original attack.

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