

The President's Daily Brief

18 March 1970

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

In Laos, North Vietnamese units are closing in on General Vang Pao's headquarters at Long Tieng. (Page 1)

About 2,400 North Vietnamese troops entered the infiltration pipeline to the South during the past week. (Page 2)

[Redacted]

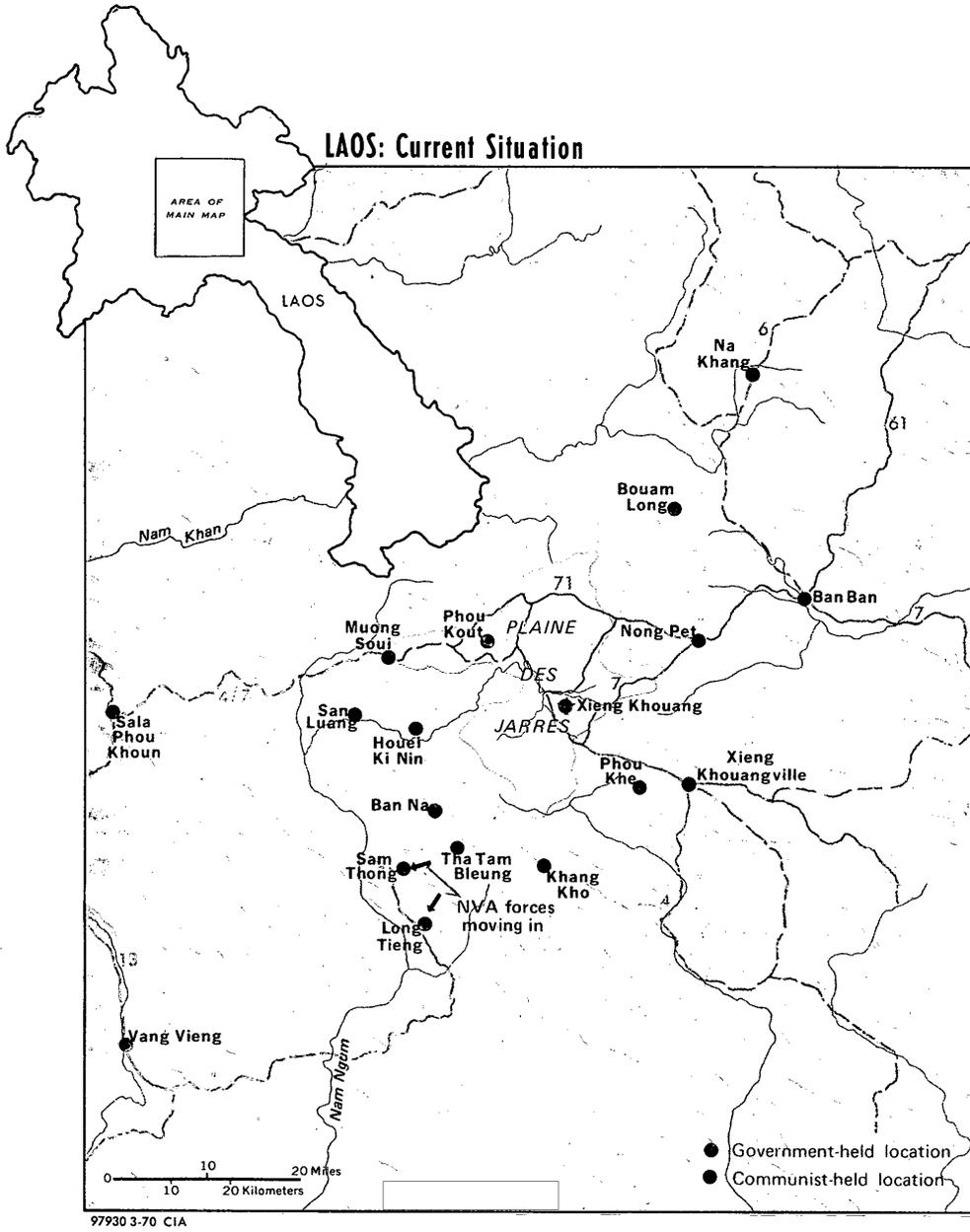
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Yesterday's violence in Manila underscores the growing influence of radicals in the Philippine student protest movement. (Page 4)

The Soviets appear to be getting ready for a large naval exercise in the eastern Mediterranean. (Page 5)

[Redacted] Greek [Redacted] Cyprus. (Page 6)

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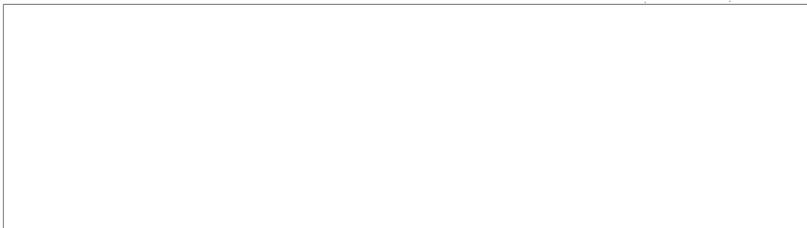
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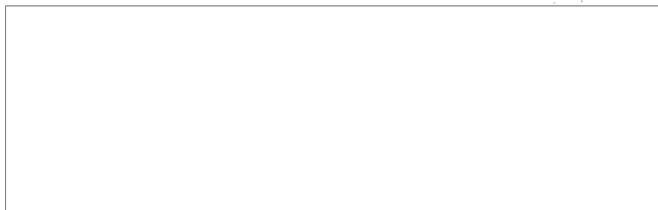
LAOS

The North Vietnamese units that overran Tha Tam Bleung on 16 March are now pushing south toward General Vang Pao's headquarters at Long Tieng. Intercepts disclose that the enemy is establishing heavy weapons positions within four miles of the base. To the northwest, the refugee center of Sam Thong has been taken by the Communists, according to late reports; the civilian population there had been evacuated earlier.

Most of the 148th Regiment of the North Vietnamese 316th Division has been committed to the operation against Long Tieng. Communist communications indicate that the North Vietnamese campaign calls for eliminating as quickly as possible all government positions within striking distance of the Plaine des Jarres.



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NORTH VIETNAM

About 2,400 troops in six groups were detected setting out on the infiltration route in the North during the past week, bringing the input thus far in March to about 5,200. This total includes eight groups containing 3,500 troops that were noted in intercepts, plus another three groups containing about 1,700 whose presence is presumed from analysis of the numbering system.

Personnel entering the pipeline since last October, when the dry season began, now stand at more than 48,000. This figure is somewhat more than half the number of troops that started out during the same period in the two previous years.

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CAMBODIA

The government's chances for extracting significant concessions from the Vietnamese Communists appear slight.

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Cambodian units on the border remain on alert. The situation there is still tense, although thus far there has been little confirmed fighting between Cambodian and Communist units. Intercepts show that some Viet Cong troops have moved "toward" the South Vietnamese border, and some small units may actually have crossed over. Other Communist forces, however, are being reinforced and show no signs of withdrawing.

The Communists may be trying to stall in the talks until Sihanouk returns to Cambodia next week. If they appear too inflexible, however, the Cambodian Government may break off the discussions. The government is keeping up the pressure by encouraging large anti - Vietnamese Communist demonstrations in Phnom Penh.

The Cambodians, with their limited resources, are not likely to apply any significant military pressure against the Communists, but the possibility of an incident is strong as long as the Cambodians continue to press for the withdrawal of Communist units. Any such development would make the political resolution of the situation much more difficult.

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PHILIPPINES

The growing influence of radicals in the Philippine student protest movement was underlined by the violence that occurred yesterday in Manila. Groups of militants marched on various targets following a downtown demonstration against the Marcos administration and US influence in the islands. One group that reached the US Embassy was dispersed by anti-riot police before doing any damage. A student at another location was killed by a private security guard; this may generate further disturbances.

The size of the demonstration--about 3,000 persons--fell short of its organizers' hopes. Radical and moderate student leaders are increasingly at odds over the need for violent tactics, and moderates apparently stayed away in anticipation of trouble. The split in the student movement will help Marcos to discredit it, but he clearly faces persistent student challenges that may force him to make further concessions.

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USSR

[redacted]
[redacted] the Russians may be preparing for a large-scale naval exercise in the eastern Mediterranean. Several Soviet warships now in the Mediterranean, including the command ship, [redacted]
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In addition, the Soviets have notified the Turks that as many as 12 warships will exit the Black Sea in the next week.

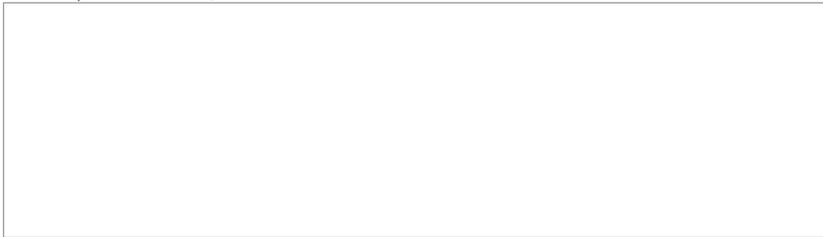
This type of communication activity resembles the preparations prior to the extensive naval maneuvers the Soviets conducted in the Mediterranean last August. If all the scheduled ship passages are made, the resulting force of 26 major surface combatants and 12 submarines will be the most powerful the Soviets have ever had in the Mediterranean. The Leningrad, the Soviets' second helicopter carrier, may make its maiden voyage outside the Black Sea and join its sister ship, the Moskva, for the exercise.

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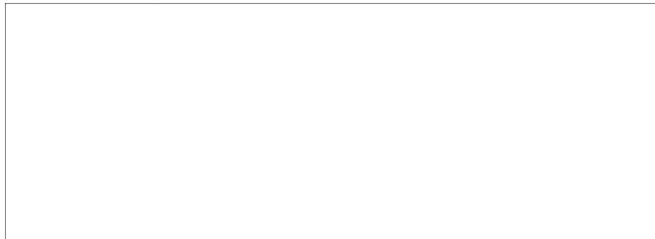
CYPRUS-GREECE



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FINLAND

The government's coalition parties won a majority of the parliamentary seats in this week's elections but their position has been weakened by a surprisingly good showing by the conservative parties. Latest returns indicate that the combined strength of the government center-left parties dropped from 165 to 136 seats.

The conservative National Coalition Party and the radical right Rural Party were the only parties to improve their positions. They increased their parliamentary representation by 11 and 17 seats respectively, and the Rural Party received 10.5 percent of the vote, the highest ever by a far-right group in Finland.

All parties participating in the center-left government lost ground, with the Center Party and the Communist-dominated People's Democratic League suffering the heaviest losses. The losses among Prime Minister Koivisto's Social Democrats were more moderate, and they remain the largest single element in parliament.

Although the election outcome would seem to point to a right-center or right-socialist coalition, Moscow, which has played a decisive role in the past, probably will insist on continuation of the present center-left coalition.

Buoyed by the election's pronounced swing to the right, conservative opposition leaders are not willing to accept another center-left lineup. They argue that it would constitute a government of losers and would not reflect the will of the electorate. In these circumstances, if Moscow applies additional pressure, the conservatives' position may be strengthened in the eyes of the public. A period of governmental instability could follow.

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LATE ITEM: CAMBODIA

Phnom Penh's domestic radio service this morning broadcast an announcement that the National Assembly has "withdrawn all confidence from Prince Sihanouk as Chief of State" and has named Cheng Heng as acting chief of state pending elections. No further details were given. Cheng Heng has been president of the National Assembly since 1968 but has little political following.



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