

The President's Daily Brief

19 March 1970



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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Cambodian Government has reiterated its policy of neutrality as the deposed Sihanouk arrives in Peking. (Page 1)

In Laos [redacted] (Page 3)

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China's claim to Taiwan continues to be the major stumbling block in the Sino-Canadian talks. (Page 4)

[redacted] East German [redacted] (Page 5)

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Latin American [redacted] (Page 6)

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CAMBODIA

There are no indications of opposition to Sihanouk's ouster in Cambodia, although some security precautions apparently have been taken in Phnom Penh by the government as an insurance measure. The government was careful to move within the limits of the constitution in deposing Sihanouk and stated that a popular election will be held to select a permanent successor to Sihanouk. Its intentions in this respect will remain in doubt, however, until an election date is set. Indeed, early this morning the French press reported that the Cambodian National Assembly has suspended all constitutional freedoms.

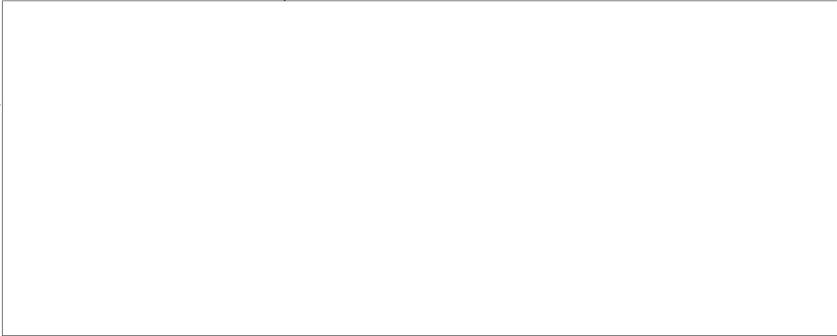
The government's sudden resoluteness represents a swift acceleration of its previous policy of gradually attacking Sihanouk's power.

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Both Lon Nol and Deputy Premier Matak, who appears to be the driving force behind recent events, probably calculated that their support within the National Assembly and the army might be chipped away by Sihanouk after he returned to Cambodia next week.

On foreign policy matters, the government announced it will maintain strict neutrality. This point was conveyed privately to the US chargé in Phnom Penh when he was summoned by a senior army officer several hours before the assembly's move against Sihanouk and again yesterday in a note from the Foreign Office.



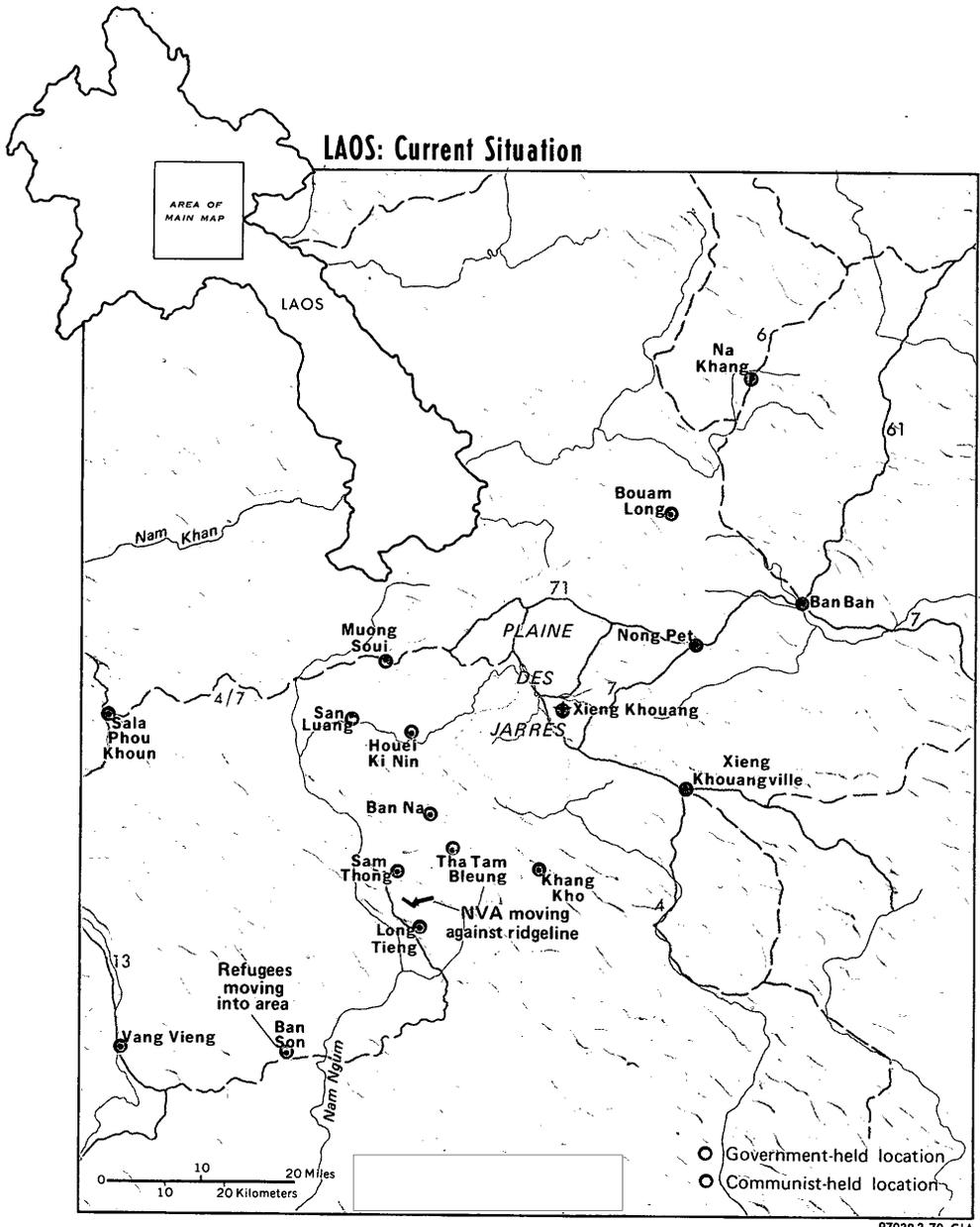
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Sihanouk long has claimed he would surrender his power if that is what the people wanted. In view of the current popular support for the government he does not appear to have any other option. Sihanouk probably will remain in the wings, hope the government falters, and then make himself available to return to Cambodia to restore national stability.

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LAOS

General Vang Pao has taken advantage of a respite in enemy activity near his Long Tieng headquarters to strengthen the area's defenses with two battalions from outlying positions. In addition, a 300-man Thai artillery battalion was airlifted into the base yesterday and is now digging in near the airstrip.

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The government's defensive efforts have been complicated by the wholesale evacuation of the Meo community from the Long Tieng area. Many government soldiers have joined the refugee ranks, the bulk of which are moving to Ban Son, some 20 miles to the southwest.

Latest reports indicate that portions of the Sam Thong and Tha Tam Bleung areas and the outposts of Ban Na and Khang Kho were still in government hands. These positions are lightly defended, however, and are not likely to hold in the face of a stiff enemy assault.

The enemy may bypass these positions in favor of an all-out effort to overrun Vang Pao's headquarters in Long Tieng.

Enemy communications indicate 260 fresh troops are being brought in to reinforce North Vietnamese units now in the area. One intercepted message discloses that one of the enemy's immediate objectives will be the occupation of a prominent ridgeline situated halfway between Sam Thong and Long Tieng, which is presently defended by a small government artillery position. Loss of the ridgeline would bring the Long Tieng airstrip, vital for the movement of men and supplies into the area, within range of enemy mortars.

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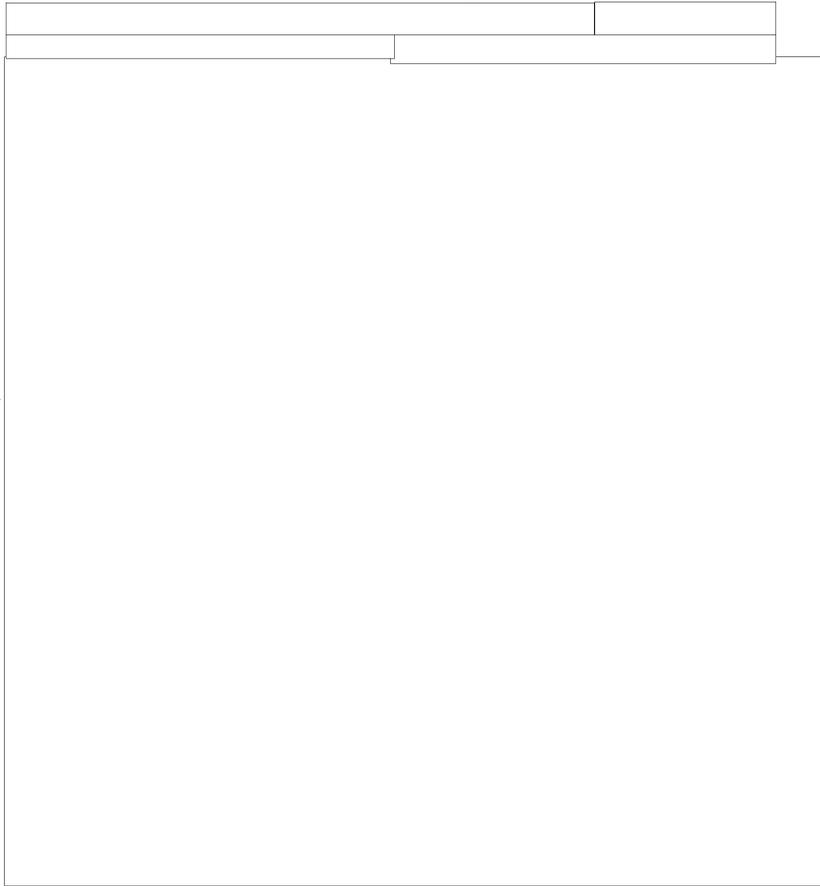
COMMUNIST CHINA - CANADA

At the 13th session of the recognition talks held in Stockholm last week, Peking backed off a bit from its earlier extreme position. It proposed a new draft communiqué that for the first time omitted language explicitly acknowledging recognition by Ottawa of China's claim to sovereignty over Taiwan. It proposed instead that Canada recognize Peking as the sole legal government of the entire Chinese people. The Canadians consider unacceptable the new draft's strong implication of recognition of Peking's territorial claims and will probably offer a reformulation at the next meeting.

The Chinese have been stonewalling on the Taiwan question since the talks began. The new communiqué is designed to give the appearance of flexibility but in substance would still require Ottawa's acceptance of China's position on Taiwan. Although Peking still has given nothing away, the new draft is the first sign that the Chinese are willing to consider even verbal flexibility on this issue. It is likely that they had the Warsaw talks in mind in making their new proposal at this time.

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EAST GERMANY

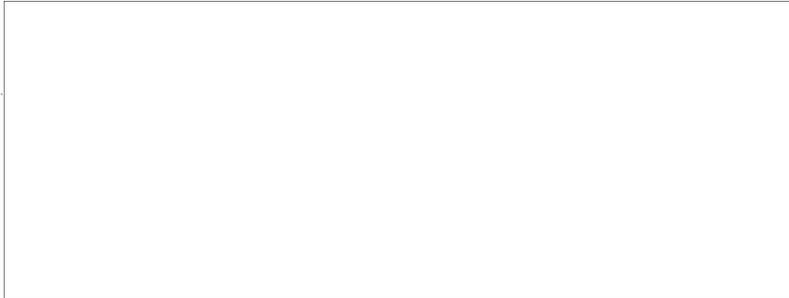


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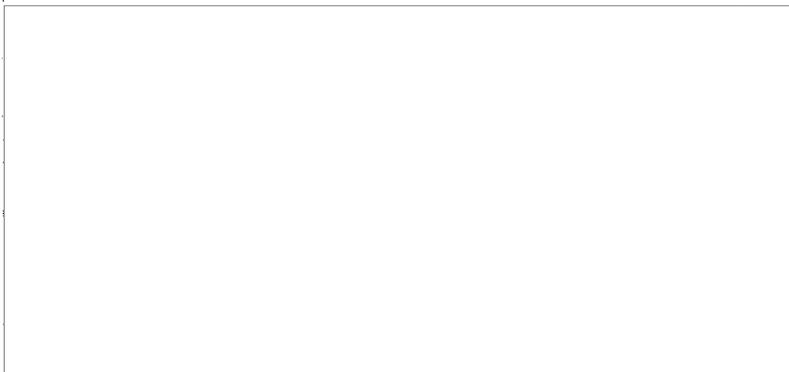
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LATIN AMERICA



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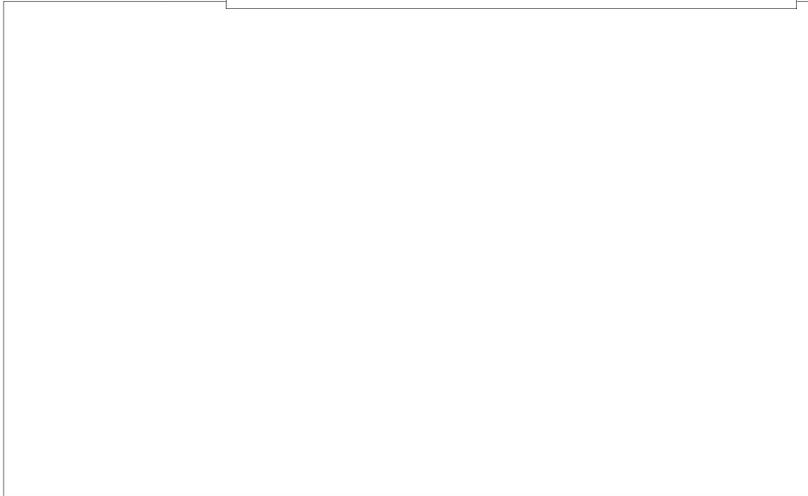
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NOTE

Vietnam:



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